

CHARACTER OF LORD BYRON'S POETRY.

The Atheneum; or, Spirit of the English Magazines (1817-1833); Feb 1, 1820; 6, 9;
American Periodicals
pg. 337

CHARACTER OF LORD BYRON'S POETRY.

From the New Monthly Magazine, Nov. 1819.

Qui proficit in literis, deficit tamen in moribus,
magis deficit quam proficit.

A JUST estimate of national morality, it is said, may always be made from the state of national literature. The proposition is not universally true ; where literature is thinly diffused the morals of the country must be measured by another standard. But when a country is in so high a state of civilization, that literature has become an occupation instead of an amusement—when books are so rapidly circulated and so universally read, that half the stock of the nation's ideas are borrowed from its writers—when *men begin to talk more of what is written than of what is done*, and authors come to legislate to our opinions and our passions, then the state of our national literature, and the tone of the popular writers, become an object of the deepest interest ; for as the people of a country read so will they feel, and as they feel so will they act.

It is this circumstance that has forced my attention to the present favourites of literature. I am a man advanced in life, and neither irascible or jealous.

particularly as I have nothing to hope or to fear, to win or to lose ; I enter the arena not without emotion, but wholly without anxiety ; and in the conflict I call to the public to "strike but hear." I have seen the strong sense and caustic spirit of the writer of the Baviad employed below their powers to "whip me those vermin," who five-and-twenty years ago stained paper with the "ropy drivel of rheumatic brains," and break on the wheel the butterfly forms of Anna Matilda, Laura Maria, and Della Crusca, cum multis aliis ; I have seen the powerful club of the Anti-Jacobin Magazine wielded with resistless effect against the hydramonster of the German school, and demolish, blow after blow, and every blow a death, all the sprouting imps of the brood, who, in the language of the Darwinian school, "breathed the soft hiss, or tried the fainter yell." But these were like the tormenting insects we brush away in an evening's walk—they tease and they buzz, but there is no strength in their wing, and no lasting venom in their sting : they "come like shadows, so depart." But now I feel

like one who, after having got rid of those insects that tormented him, and hoping that the close of his progress may be unmolested, sees to his terror and astonishment a meteor rising above the horizon, "perplexing him with fear of change;" a meteor, the elements of whose orbit are beyond all calculation, whose fiery hair shakes "pestilence" though not war—and who retires troubled and anxious how the night so portentously ushered in may end.

It must be obvious that I allude to Lord Byron—a phenomenon to whom the literature of no age can produce a parallel: would that he were not a greater phenomenon, if possible, in the moral than in the intellectual world—would that the inscription which posterity must place on the pedestal to which modern idolatry has raised him, were not to be like that placarded on the statue of Louis XVth.: "Sans foi, sans loi, et sans entrailles." I feel his genius—I know his popularity—I know his power—I care not; power, when employed in the cause of evil, only calls for a louder cry of denunciation if it may be resisted, or of depreciation if it may be averted. I will say what I think, and let his idolaters *think what they say*. I am aware of the danger I incur in attacking the popular idol, but I heed it not; he is like the image in the dream of the king of Babylon, he is part gold and silver, but part brass and clay, and such an image must fall and be broken in pieces.

Time and morality will deal alternate blows at its perishable frame, like the giant-statues with their flails in the visionary adventure of Roderic. The blows of the former are slow—the blows of the latter are sometimes decisive at once. What has become of Rochester, and Sedley, and Vanburgh, and Wycherly? Nay, who reads Dryden now without wishing his pages expurgated—*immoral poetry was never long-lived*. Let the noble writer remember that, and let his admirers remember it too—a brief and forced existence is bestowed on it from the hot-bed of contemporary pruriency of feeling—we wonder at its rapid growth—we are dazzled by its

glaring colours—are overcome by its oppressive odour; but we sicken while we praise, and, before we have ceased to praise, the object of our admiration has sickened too. There is, I allow, a fearful excess of genius and passion, when united, that obliterates for a moment the distinction between right and wrong, and makes us half believe, that vice so dignified is almost virtue, and virtue so overshadowed almost loses its lustre. But this union of powerful talent and intense feeling is very rare; the Jewish theology distinguished well between the spirits who knew most, and the spirits who love most. Lord Byron has no excuse from that dangerous union of mental enthusiasm, and heart-born passion, that may lead far astray the minds of youthful poets when they love, but leaves behind it a glorious and fearful light, like that which follows the erratic path of the meteor.

There is a generous and almost noble vice in that superb devotion, that "proud humility," with which we prostrate ourselves before the object of our earthly adoration, it has (I speak it with reverence) many of the characteristics of true religion; it has the same spirit of self-resignation, of humiliation, of profound abjection of spirit, of an utter prostration of all its powers, mental and bodily, before the idol for whom it is dearer to die than to live for the first object on earth—such is the enthusiasm of youthful passion. Lord Byron has nothing of this; he makes love like a sensualist, or a bandit; he loves only to enjoy, or to ravage; he stoops not to admire the brilliant colours, or to inhale the delicious odour of the flower; if he stoops it is to crush, to trample, and to destroy; he never remarks or commends one single moral or mental quality in the object of his passion; he appreciates her with all the callous and calculating brutality of a slave-merchant (in the miserable countries in which he wastes his existence) by her locks that sweep the ground, or her naked feet that outshine the marble: he is a Mahomet (vacillating between lust and ferocity) who would grasp the bright locks of his Irene, and strike off her head before his

bashaws, pour un coup de theatre. The man knows nothing of passion.

There is also a pardonable enthusiasm in youth : the brilliant and seductive colouring with which imagination paints the desormity of life—it is venial—it is almost justifiable to represent it to others in this light.

We have not to fear that the deception will be continued : perhaps we have to fear it may be dispelled too soon—in travelling through the desert of life, if a delirious companion points out to us a *mirage*, and invites us to drink, we cannot but sympathize with the delusion we almost partake of. Reality is equally insufficient for the demands of the imagination and of the heart, and poets, the slaves of both, may be forgiven if they paint with glowing and exaggerated touches a world of their own, a world of *love* and music, and fragrance, of flowers that steal their balmy spoils from Paradise, and airs that “lap us in Elysium :” and if they dwell too much on the *first* of these exquisite elements of their paradise we pardon them, for we feel that life has already *undeceived us*, and will soon *undeceive them*; they will learn that hatred is much more the business of the world than love ; that in life, to speak the language of the schools, suffering is the *essence* and joy the *accident*.

Almost the first strains of every poet have been devoted to Love, but his latter, or at least the greater part of his works, are dedicated to Grief. Even the muse of Moore (the loosest of modern poets) has latterly changed her garb and her accent, as the French say, to *throw herself into religion*. It is said she can accommodate herself even to the monotonous psalmody of a Hebrew synagogue—can in a fine la Vagliere style resign the luxuries and magnificence of the court, embellished by her charms, and polluted by her depravity, for the coarse weeds and chilling austerity of a Carmelite penitent ; or, to speak in a more awful metaphor, we hope the harlot has converted her dearly-bought gains into the *price of the ointment of her conversion*, has bowed at her Saviour’s feet, and wept there,

and wiped them with those rich and redundant tresses so often garnished with meretricious decorations and displayed as the popular banner around which vice and voluptuousness were summoned to rally—tresses which should have rather streamed like the hair of Berenice, the ornament of earthly loveliness, and the symbol of celestial invitation—the light of earth, and the star of heaven. Youthful poets have had their errors, but they have had their reformation ; the acute susceptibility, and severish desire of excitement that led them far astray was a pledge of their happy return—the pendulum touched by no mortal hand vibrates beyond all mortal calculation, and the writer who set out in his triumphant career of folly, pruriency, and vice returns from his *alternate oscillation* purged, purified and sanctified. None but minds of power can prove these extremes ; all minds of power in their turn have proved them, they have erred, and are bid by the voice of man and God to “go and sin no more.”—The muse of Byron sets out at once in the extreme, her language is blasphemy, her character misanthropy, her passion hatred, her religion despair. I have before spoken of that desert in which other writers have tried to rear the flower, or to flatter with the mirage. The horrors of the desert are not enough for this writer, he aggravates them by breathing over its wilds the icy Sarsar wind of death, and watching in its withering hiss the echoes of that blast, which announces the annihilating desolation of his own powerful and blasted mind—in the breath that exhales from his pages, no flower of life can bloom—no verdure can flourish, no animal can live—the heart and its passions, life and its purposes, are alike suspended—nothing of creation can prosper ; “ the icy air burns fierce, and cold performs the effect of fire.” What becomes of the convert of his poetical creed ? (*Poetical creed*, for he has no other,) the victim gazes around him, wonders why or for what he lives—love is illusion—nature a name—religion a farce—and futurity a jest—the convert vows, believes in—nothing—“ dies, and makes no sign.”

—But “God forgive” *the author*. In writing of Lord Byron do I dare to deny or depreciate the genius of the first poet of the age?—No—I were unworthy to be his meanest reader did I not confess to his *immortal dishonour* (let not those words be lightly esteemed), that he is a man whose intellectual powers might, like those of the ancient mathematician, shake the world from its place—God grant he may never find his *περισσόνα*—or we may tremble for the dissolution of the moral universe.—I grant him genius “*beyond the potentiality of intellectual avarice*”—imagination that exalts worlds, and then imagines new—an eloquence of poetry that might draw after it the third part of heaven’s host were they yet untempted—an imperial command of the whole region of poetry from its highest summit to its lowest declivity—an eye, whose reach extending beyond the range described by Shakspeare himself, scorns the restraint of that “proud liminary cherub,” and glances not only from heaven to earth, but from heaven to hell—a felicity, richness, a variety of poetical modulation, for which nothing is too lofty or too low, from the satire to the sonnet, from the epic to the ballad; which can combine and echo in the same lines misanthropy and mirth, levity and despair—that like the satanic host, when assembled in council, can contract or expand its dimensions at will, can to “smallest forms reduce its shape immense, and be at large”—but still “amid the hall of that infernal court”—where he presides as the master demon—the god of hell—in all the dazzling glory of omnipotent depravity—the mind sinks under the task of eulogizing, or describing, or even imagining the powers of that “man—all-mighty” who like his prototype, in “Kehama,” plunges from the heaven he has violated to the hell he has obtained the empire of, and deserves to reign over.

I would accumulate on him every expression that was ever dictated, uttered, or extorted, by the enthusiasm of praise, or the devotion of admiration; but when I had done so, I should feel

I had been only heaping coals of fire on his head.

Every talent so depraved becomes a crime; the intellectual powers rise up in judgment against their betrayer, every line (however its echo may be drowned by intemperate praise) has a voice that says “Why hast thou thus dealt with thy servant?”—praise is the bitterest satire, and admiration a horrible and hollow mockery.—I know no exaltation more terrible than intellectual eminence thus seated like the regicides of old in a chair of torture, crowned with a circle of burning metal, and whose anointing turns to poison as it drops on the head of the usurper—while all the subject talents that should “put to their mouths the sounding alchemy,” turning away from the pomp “plead trumpet tongued against the deep damnation” of their apostate sovereign, and their own abused and prostituted energies.

But I have spoken enough of Lord Byron, let him now speak for himself. The end of all poetry is to instruct or to please. He who seeks either from the perusal of Lord Byron, must have a singular taste—He must be prepared to look for it in the mingled and chaotic gloom of infidelity, misanthropy, political scepticism (the untiring and dangerous companion of both), and the avowed and ostentatious abandonment of every moral principle, social duty, and domestic feeling—“whatsoever things are pure, are lovely, are of good report—if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” his reader must invert the rule of a writer very different from Lord Byron—he must NOT “think of these things.” From Lord Byron’s own pages I shall select proofs that the charge is not exaggerated. From a poet we expect something to exalt or to delight, we expect that if his subjects be connected with the best interests and feelings of man, his lines shall breathe a lofty spirit of religious devotion, a pure and high love of morality, that they will display all the enthusiasm of patriotism and the eloquence of passion, that all his public energies will be in their fullest vigour, all his so-

cial affections richly harmonized—that the dulcia vita of his lines will rather exaggerate the goods of life than its evils, that his appropriate office will be rather to “open Paradise in the wild,” than to aggravate its sterility, defile its fountains, and blast its rare and infrequent spots of verdure;—and that when we have closed his pages, we shall wish that life was what he describes it, or at least think better of what he has described so well.

Is this to be found in the poetry of Lord Byron?—what shall we think of the religion of him who describes death as

“The first dark day of *nothingness*,
The last of weakness and distress?”

(The best wish perhaps that the reader of these withering lines can give the author, is, that *he may find it so.*) Take another specimen of Lord Byron’s creed from Childe Harold:

“Even gods must yield, *religions take their turn*,
‘Twas Jove’s, ‘tis Mahomet’s, and other creeds
Will rise with other years,—till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds.”

Alas! and is there then *no truth?*—there is at least one obvious one, that the writer of those lines had no creed, and believed no truth. Take one more specimen, which I almost shudder to trace:—

“The lyre
The only heaven to which earth’s children may aspire.” *Childe Harold.*

This needs no comment.*

What shall we think of the political principles of the writer whose tergiversation, self-contradiction, and anomalous versatility put calculation and conjecture to the blush, and make even genius ridiculous? who meanly insults Buonaparte in a lame and halting ode, and then in a *palinode* revives the hopes of his partizans, by the assurance that the violet shall again bloom in their vallies? Abstract principles in politics are, indeed, hardly worth contending for, and historical events become, from the late rapidity with which they have passed

* Also in Harold’s song to “Donna Inez,” the poet speaks of the mark which the “fabled Hebrew wanderer bore.” It is useless, however, to multiply passages to prove what is almost self obvious.

before our eyes, remote almost as soon as beheld; and where is the man, except Lord Byron, who in the very seat and centre of that most awful struggle in Spain, which he must have witnessed, could write these frigid lines with a hand unshaken and a heart unmoved?—

“Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies,
The shouts are France, Spain, Albion, Victory,
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but ever *fights in vain.*”

Time has proved the prediction as false as it was then base and soul-less; Albion could not fight in vain; her cause went security for her with Heaven, and she has nobly redeemed her debt.

There is a heartlessness about this man, that is the original sin of his poetry—every line represents and forces it on the reader with brightful fidelity. His country was engaged in a conflict unparalleled in magnitude and difficulty; did he aid her by arm, or brain or pen?—did he wield a sword in her battles?—did he breathe a word in her senate? No: Rome was on fire, and Nero sat playing on his harp. He neither fought her battles, or eulogized her heroes.

Tyrtæus himself, lame as he was could animate by his songs those whom he could not lead to battle. What did our modern Tyrtæus? the champions of his country bled, and he joyously smiled.†

I have not done with his political heresies. I repeat, what shall we think of the man who can address a late illustrious personage in the words—

“Weep daughter of a royal line
A sire’s disgrace, a realm’s decay?”

can wipe away his own tears with the same facility with which he scrawled his Jacobinie whine, and on an event which all his countrymen wept with eyes and hearts overflowing, could only produce the hemistich (half borrowed from Ossian)

“in the dust
The fair-haired daughter of the Isles is laid.”

† What shall we think of the man who, on viewing “Talavera’s plain,” the Golgotha of his fallen countrymen, could with the heartlessness of a French philosophie, and the withering sneer of a demon, address them as—

“Ambition’s honored fools—there let them rot.”

The consistency of his literary principles is the same with that of his political—now eulogizing—now abusing. Does he really imagine that we have forgotten his “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers?” or though we have, that Scott and Moore can ever forget it. Yet, on these distinguished writers he has poured abuse as virulent as its retraction was mean: to Moore, under the familiar and colloquial appellative of “my dear Moore,” he dedicates one of his poems, no matter which; they are all only Lord Byron in various masquing habits, the costume changed, but the same hideous likeness faithfully preserved.

I have done with his want of all religious creed, his desertion of that only anchor of the soul, with his defalcation in all public feeling, or political principle; with his revolting inconsistency in literary opinion.

I pass on to his satire (yes, his satire, for that predominates throughout all his works). Misanthropy is very satirical, and I know no work of Lord Byron's that may not properly be termed a satire on religion, morality, social order, or domestic feeling; but *his satire is not satire*; it is only the morbid effusion of universal misanthropy. He lashes not with the hope of causing amendment, but of inflicting pain: the arm is strong, and the scourge is heavy; but there is no benefit in the blow; it might be keenly retorted on him, “strip thy own back.”

The genuine satirist selects appropriate subjects, and marks them with discriminating severity. Is this the characteristic of his satire, who, feeling nothing too high for his temerity, or his talents, and nothing too low for his malignity, sometimes reviles his sovereign, and sometimes lampoons a scullion? After this who will value or dread his ostracism?

A charge still heavier remains against his writings: the noblest intellectual power may suffer eclipse under a passing cloud of scepticism; in the strife of the political warfare, a man may sometimes be seen among the enemy's ranks, whom we know to be in his heart on the other side. But what writer can assign a

cause, (I do not talk of *pleading an excuse*, for that is impossible) for the predominant impurity of his works, but the predominant depravity of his mind.

The works of Lord Byron are just fit to be bound up with those of Cleland and Parny: it is incredible how females can peruse them, or how husbands and fathers can suffer their infamous impurity to shed its venom on the female mind. Look to his *Parisina*,—his *Manfred*,—his—look to all he has ever written.

Crime itself appears too vapid for his taste; simple fornication is not enough, it must be seasoned by adultery, by incest, by every loathsome, and ineffable combination. Vice, in its unmodified state, is not sufficiently meretricious.

The harlot must be arrayed in the tempting and transparent splendor of the Coa vestimenta. The Priapus must be attired in full-dress, drawers of the thinnest silk to make his hideous organism more prominent and obtrusive; the object of passion in order to stimulate the raging debility of exhausted sensuality, must be an adulteress, a stepmother, or a sister; with a reference to the atrocious indecencies of *Don Juan* I shall not pollute my page.

After this it seems idle to notice lighter defects in Lord Byron's compositions; yet while admitting the unquestioned and unquestionable eminence of his genius, I know not any writer whose pages present more frequent instances of violation of every rule of good composition. His rhyme is often harsh, eccentric, and prosical; if wit be justly defined the discovery of a resemblance between remote objects, no specimen of it occurs in his writings. I know not a single simile or metaphor that ever brought one acquainted with a resemblance unknown before.

He paints from his own mind more than from nature or life; nor from either of the latter does he appear to have learned one beautiful combination, or one powerful contrast. He appears to have looked on nature with the eye of a man who was trying to make the most of a storm, and powerfully depict its thunderings and lightnings; but

amidst them he never reverts to the low voice of the Almighty, breaking forth through their terrors, and sending to man *his law, even from the mount that burned with fire.* His imagery often revolts us by its unexpected vulgarity :—

“ Devices quaint, and frolics ever new,
Tread on each other’s kibes.”

His epithets seem selected with wilful absurdity of inappropriateness :—

“ *Young-eyed* lewdness”

seems to have been borrowed from the mock-Darwin poetry of the Anti-jacobin, where we have—

“ *Of young-eyed* massacres the cherub crew.”

I protest I know not which monster is most loathsome ; but, I believe, Lord Byron’s.

There is also a wretched affectation of classical pedantry, which would be disgusting in the theme of a school-boy. He raves about Parnassus, and “ babbles about green fields” in Greece, as if any man in the present enlargement of intellect and diffusion of knowledge need have recourse to a dead language for either instruction or delight. This affectation leads him to unpardonable puerilities of common-place language. War is Mars, and female patriotism Minerva, and he invokes *the Muse*, and calls the moonlight “ pale Hecate’s rays ;” his Græco-mania, seems, however, latterly exchanged for a Turcomania ; and the Rose must be “ Gul,” and the nightingale “ Bulbul,” and the Moon “ Phingari,” and his heroines count the beads of a “ Comboloio,” and fall in love with a “ Galiongee.” Any thing but a Christian name for Lord Byron. “ This shews a pitiful ambition in the fool who uses it.”

Even amid the richest luxuriance of poetical description, the want of a moral taste withers all its flowers. Moral taste is more closely combined with intellectual taste than Lord Byron is disposed to imagine. There is something selfish, physical, and heartless in his enjoyments, as well as his descriptions ; and one cannot help feeling revolted by the morbid emasculation of a mind that can abandon the morality and intelli-

gence of England, for the depraved manners and intellectual destitution of that society he can paint so well, because—

“ He likes to dine on Beceasios.”

and would rather encounter a cart laden with grapes, than a wagon filled with the healthful harvest of his country.

I know nothing easier than to compose a poem *a la* Byron : I acknowledge, also, I know nothing more difficult than to array it in the decorations of a genius like his. The recipe is easily made : take a (not) human being, load him with every vice and every evil passion that can deface humanity ; if these are not sufficient, (as Lord Byron generally seems to think,) borrow as much pride, malignity, and blasphemy as Satan can afford, if Satan can afford enough : let him have a mistress, (a hero is “ better accommodated than with a wife ;”) but take care that she be *the wife of another man*—if possible, of *his father*, or, in default of that, let her (in some hemistich that seems to faulter at its own meaning,) be *insinuated* to be *his sister*. Observe, let this only be insinuated, let a hint of it be dropt as in “ Mansfred,” by a conscious and terrified domestic ; for though Lord Byron has brought us to bear fornication in the “ Giaour,” and “ Corsair,” adultery in “ Mazeppa,” and even adulterous incest in “ Parisina ;” this last outrage of natural and social feeling must be breathed in a hint : brothers else might trample on the pages, and sisters commit them to the flames, unless they were fortified by the previous study of the trial of *the Monster Horne*. Let the hero gnash his teeth, rattle his chains, and if there be a thunder storm to be had, hold them close to the grating of his dungeon in hopes that the lightning may strike both, (and as Sancho’s wife said when the thunder-bolt fell on the pillory, *on such may it always light*,) let him curse, writhe, and agonize through four cantos, and then make a ranting confession to a priest, (aware of the joke of an Atheist confessing to a priest) like the Giaour ; or disappear,

nobody knows why, and nobody cares where ; like Conrad, or like Manfred, battle with the devil to the last breath, and give him, (as he is well able), the worst of it after all.

In the progress of the composition, three things must be chiefly attended to as constituting the very essence of the admired prototype—first, *let there be no narrative* : the interest derived from watching the progress of animating events, the opposition of character, or the strife of conflicting interests and passions must be altogether neglected or effaced ; there must be no variations of light and shade, no soft gradations of colouring, no lovely and mingling attenuations of tint, like those of the rainbow, melting into each other, and dissolving and uniting the bright and contracted hues into “one arch of peace ;” no, let the whole atmosphere be black, heaven shut out, and earth all darkness, let one predominating tinge of “ebon grain” swallow up every object and every colour, and while genius like his alone, sends a flash across the gloom, let it be like the brilliant and terrific lightning of a midnight storm that makes darkness more awful, and light itself blasting and horrible.

Secondly, let the essence of the poem be wholly *physical*—let the females be arrayed in all the meretricious and intoxicating sensuality of the serail, but they must not have one charm of mind, one attraction of virtue—“their large blue eyes, fair locks, and snowy hands,” must be taken at a fair appraisement in lieu of one intellectual trait, one pure feeling, one virtuous energy—if ever they display resolution, let it be in the appropriate and feminine act of murder—while the milder heroines (like Medora) have only to conclude a life of prostitution and outlawry, by lying down to die (on the singular incident of their lovers going out on a piratical expedition) with a bouquet of flowers in their hands, (as it was formerly the custom to equip their less guilty brothers of the gibbet in England)* and “dye in their calling like clever Tom Clinch.” Lastly, let it not be possible for the ut-

* Vide Swift.

most malice of ingenuity to extort a moral from the work—let it be turned and sifted every way, but let the last and hopeless confession of the reader be “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Let the braves and the banditti, the harlots and the murderesses die without remorse, as they have lived without feeling—let them begin in blasphemy and end in despair—let them not shew “one compunctionous visiting of nature”—let the heroes, after a course of incestuous adultery, die like Hugo, insulting the parent whom they have violated nature to injure—or let them, in their last hours, contend with the demon whose hideousness is annihilated and lost in the preternatural deformity and turpitude of his victim, who is able to give “bloody instructions” to his teacher, and even to school him out of his own book—and finally, let the reader rise from the page with the conviction that there is nothing new under the sun, since Job’s wife has long ago extracted the quintessence of Lord Byron’s morality, and presented it in four short words ; “Curse God and die.” As Lord Byron perhaps never read the book, he may be forgiven the apparent plagiarism.

To imagine a poem so constructed is easy, but to imagine such a being as the author, requires an union of incredibilities that might startle the strongest imagination—we must then try to imagine a man who, while his country is called to a trial more awful than any the page of history exhibits, more interesting to a son of that country than all his darling Greece ever sustained, or had virtuous energy to sustain, stood apart (with all his pretensions to keen sensibilities and lofty feelings) and contented himself with sneering in cold-blooded apathy at the patriotism he did not feel, the wisdom he did not possess, and the valour he shrunk from imitating.

Let us try to imagine a man, who, possessed of a genius sublime and unrivalled, delights only in its prostitution, as the ancient king of Lydia found even the beauties of his wife insufficient for his felicity till he had exhibited her naked charms to his favourite.

Let us try to imagine a man, who, blessed, or (as he would make it out) cursed with all the lavish and glorious opulence of nature, genius, and fortune (powers that rarely unite in their favours), tramples the pearls under his feet, and malignantly turns to rend the giver—who, bound to life by every tie that can render life lovely or precious—a companion fair and pure,—a child—and that child a daughter too—can fling them off—ramble into remote regions with unIntellectual harlots, and leave for the consolation of the deserted wife, a satire on a kitchen maid—a man who, enabled and qualified to enjoy, to embellish, and to dignify every scene of polished intercourse, and intellectual luxury, prostitutes his life away amid sceptics and sensualists—a man who, gifted with the finest and most keenly-pointed darts in satire's own quiver, has allowed vice to riot, and folly to revel in his sight unsmitten and unhurt, and reserved their swiftest and sharpest aim only to be directed against religion, patriotism, moral feeling, and conjugal fidelity.

A man who, affecting (and it is but affectation) a superiority that exempts him from chastisement or censure, pretending to be seated in the clouds far above the lightning and thunder of public opinion, and laughing at their futile explosion, yet shews the wincing of a galled jade at the slightest touch of criticism, and retaliates with a fierceness of invective, a trepidation of jealousy, and

an eagerness of mingled rage, fear, and acrimony, that has terrified even the Edinburgh reviewers into submission and praise. Lastly, a man who, “knew he but his happiness, of men the happiest, he” runs wild about the world, in a fit of misanthropy run mad, and crazed with a satiety of every blessing, tries to make the world believe he is miserable, and to persuade it to be as miserable as himself—if imagination sinks under such a task, the original is to be met with in Lord Byron.

I have detained public attention too long with a subject which derives its importance only from its mischief. I have one question to propose to the readers and admirers of Lord Byron (the power of his genius has made the terms synonymous)—what man ever rose wiser, better, or happier, from the perusal of his writings?—what female ever closed his pages strengthened in rectitude, confirmed in chastity, or softened to benevolence? Did man or woman ever carry away from his writings one principle of action, one rule of life, one thought, one image that might suggest comfort in this life, or hope in the next? I have done with him—I leave his character to the painting of a bold, and one would almost think a prophetic pen.

He is one whom—“brighter reason prompts to bolder crimes—when *heavely talents* make *infernal hearts*—that insurmountable extreme of guilt.”

New Monthly Magazine

The New - York Literary Journal, and Belles - Lettres Repository (1820-1821); Jun 5, 1820; 3, 2;

American Periodicals

pg. 122

tinguished by their indiscriminate severity to their deserving offspring, fling the whole weight of their fondness into the scale of demerit and ingratitude, and like Titania, become "enamoured of an ass,"—and their folly becomes at once their punishment and their degradation. When the world is thus determined, it is incredible with what punctuality it fulfils the conditions of this compact—how it praises and patronises its adopted favourite—how it exaggerates all its merits, goes bail for all its offences, as if there were no merits but what its praise must sanction, and no offences but what its protection must justify ; let a being so favoured and so flattered be guilty of every irregularity—let him have insulted decency, profaned religion, trampled on social order, and traduced constituted authorities, society still hugs him to her bosom, and whispers in a palliating tone, that it is Alcibiades defacing the images of the gods ;—doubtless the apology is sufficient—but not to me. The "l'Enfant gâté," whether of domestic or literary life, deserves sore and severe chastisement, and he shall have it, "whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear ;"—let it be remembered too, that the l'Enfant gâté, whether in the nursery or in life, always betrays the same tendencies, the same petulance, premature restlessness, and disgusting frowardness. He is always the "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself, and falls on t'other side." His too is the "tetchy and wayward infancy," that fights with the breast that feeds him ; that "crams and blasphemous the feeder"—or, to drop the language of metaphor, such a being can at once borrow his subsistence from the powers he vilifies—accuse the atmosphere he lives in for the breath it lends him—and insult the laws, for the protection they afford him for abusing them. Yet this shall be a being flattered and caressed, noticed by nobles, and adored by women of rank and

**CRITICISMS ON THE MODERN POETS—
THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.**

"Some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them."

THERE are sometimes persons to be met with in life, whom the whole world seems to have conspired to treat with causeless and capricious indulgence, as if "mistaking the reverse of wrong for right ;" they have imagined this would be an atonement for their hourly wrongs of insulted genius and neglected merit. Thus we often see, in an ill-regulated and unhappy family, parents who are dis-

fashion. He shall pass like a meteor from England to Ireland, shedding a brilliant, ominous, and pestilential glare on both countries, and our literary astronomers shall apply their telescopes, and call this newly discovered planet—Moore.

From what the eminence of Moore has risen it would be rather difficult for candid criticism to discover. He is best described by negatives. He is not a man of *superlative* poetical powers : Lord Byron is far beyond him in all the true essence of genius, in all the constituent and elementary parts of a genuine poet. He is not a man of profound research and erudition. He is no explorer of the untravelled deserts of the soul ; not a man who can drop his line of investigation further than ever “did plummet sound,” and bring it up tinged with the proof of his startling and profound discoveries. Wordsworth, and even Wilson, and *the school of lakers*, with all the distortion of their affectation, all their lisping and babyish mawkishness, all the sickening and yet insulting arrogance of their egotism, know more of human concerns and the human heart than Moore does, however they disguise and abuse the knowledge they possess. He is not a man of acute and deep observation in human life ; a man skilled in detecting and tracing the changes that the mind undergoes from the modifications of society, the vicissitudes of manners and opinions, and from the topographical influence of local residence and incidental proximity to objects different from what it is usually familiar with. Scott and Hogg, and even Southey, know infinitely more, and have infinitely more the power of painting freshly and vividly the changes of the mind as caused by what may be called the various dispensations of manners, often as powerful as the dispensations of religion in producing an exterior revolution in the aspect of society.

There is nothing in the writings—

there is nothing in the mind of Moore, that can furnish the brilliant and chivalric paintings of Scott (for Scott is a painter more than a poet) ; nothing that can furnish the strong national characterism—the wild, picturesque, and yet vital, delineation of the untamed ferocity of the mountain chiefs, the lifeless austerity, the super-human abstraction, the *επιτροπός βίος*, (mixed with the wildest enthusiasm of military glory, and the implacable obstinacy of Judaical pertinacity, singularly and inharmoniously blended with the language, not the spirit, of the Gospel) in his representation of the covenanters—nothing that can, in fact, give us the wild, and yet awful, picture of a nation in masquerade, *all disguised*, yet *all known*, the fantastic spirit of some presiding demon in the garb of religion, arraying all in their appropriate costume, dictating to all their creed of blasphemy and nonsense, like the devil Milinax, in the Duke of Guise, prompting them with their parts when they fail, and finally, disrobing them of their borrowed vestments at the hour of their departure, and whispering to them the fallacy of their pretensions, and the awful reality of their despair. Such are the powerful pictures that the great writer we allude to has drawn of periods more interesting as they become more obscure from the interruptions of time, the incuriosity of contemporaries, and the infidelities of tradition.

In what, then, is Moore eminent ? Not in the naked and gigantic sublimity of absolute genius ; not in the piercing and profound anatomy of the human heart ; not in the keen, various, and amusive display of the anomalies of human life ; not in the strong and thrilling personification of human passion ; not in the salutary and heart-touching impression of one mighty moral. He has fluttered “about and about” Parnassus, sending to us occasionally music from the breezes he inhales, and colours from

the flower he visits : but every breeze brings withering on its wings, and every flower in its fragrance reminds one of the blossoms of the Upas tree : it is all infection and death—death, not mortal only. In adverting to the poetry of Moore, I am forced to undertake a painful task ; it is horrible to excruciate morbid impurity by the touch, that, in order to heal, must first feel, expose, and exasperate the seat where the venom is lodged ; but it is necessary.

Of a poet in *our days* much is demanded, and much must be paid. Thank God, we have done with the times when the first writers in Britain were obliged to saturate a royal mistress with fulsome praise more prostituted (if possible) than her person, and to beg their “leave to toil” of a wretch who sometimes sold it in the wantonness of regal prostitution, sometimes in the venality of regal rapacity, and sometimes in the comparatively innocent intoxication of the vanity of her feelings or her profession. The prefaces and the prologues of Dryden, and Lee, and Otway, bear melancholy attestations to this truth ; they were forced to flatter for bread ; they “crouched like hounds beneath the lash”—and a bitter lash it was : but *they* had at least the excuse of the impostor’s wife in Henry the Sixth—

Alack, sir,
We did it all for pure need.

Dependent as they were on the smiles of a courtezan, (and through her on the favour of a witty, but voluptuous monarch, alternately the degraded pensioner of Louis XIV. and the slave of the wretched French prostitutes, purchased and sent over for the empoisonment of his political principles, the degradation of his character, and the abject enthralment of all his energies, intellectual and moral) they may perhaps be forgiven. Prostituted genius was their crime ; but want was their apology.

Has Moore such an apology ? No : he had no need to bow the head before voluptuousness, or flatter royal mistresses. His errors are of his own seeking. His vice is his own choice. He is criminal, not from the necessity, but the love of crime. What shall we say of the man who, without any claims from personal necessity, (such as it must be feared far more distinguished minds, and far better hearts, have proved and suffered,) turns *volunteer in the cause of impurity*, who blasphemous decency without the pretext of a bribe from necessity, and, reversing the accusation of Satan, “*serves the Devil for nought.*” Such has been Moore from his youth : his earliest efforts resembled a kind of premature dance round a Priapus. The loathsome obscenity and wild contortions of his motions were forgiven or overlooked. We all fondly hoped that a phoenix would arise from the impure and fetid ashes of Tom Little ;—that, to borrow the language of Buchanan,* the child who had “*perfected the praise* of the infamous phallic idol in the procession of Jaggernaut,” might yet become a convert to Christianity, and renounce the vile and impure idolatries of his infancy.

Has this been the case ?—I must with revolting hand and pen track him through his course of unrepudiated indecency—unqualified jacobinism ; and, I dread to add, unrepented infidelity. Of the two former, the most ample proofs are to be found in his writings ; the last must be referred to his conscience ; and, first of the first, I hesitate not to say, that Moore is a writer whose impurity is the most wilful, deliberate, and persevering, that ever insulted heaven, and contaminated society.

The maxim of the ancient orator, that action—action—action, was the soul of oratory, appears to have been

* Vide the worship of Jaggernaut, as described by Buchanan himself.

translated by Moore, construing the essence of poetry into lust—lust—lust. I can find nothing else in his writings. I have read them all. How much he owes me for reading them ; how much more may he owe me for distinguishing him as he deserves—as the high priest, not even of the *Venus semireducta*, but of the “dark veiled” Cotytto—of the Venus γενετιλλίας. If want of decency is want of sense, what shall we think of the man who insults both by going out of his way in the restless search after obscenity, who can publish such lines as these :

Thus in our looks some propagation lies,
For we make babies in each other's eyes.

Who can insult the Deity in his wrath, and his creatures amid the terrors that the visible display of that wrath excites, even amid the *brute* creation, and deify lust in the lines that follow :

Loud howled the wind in the ruins above,
And murmured the warnings o'er
our *head,
While fearless we offered devotions to love,
The rude rock our pillow, the rushes our
bed.
* * * * *

I shudder to trace the rest—

Dread was the lightning, and horrid its glare,
But it showed me my Julia in languid delight.

Of the Julia (whoever she was) and her lover, we have only to regret that the lightning spared two such monsters to insult the atmosphere they breathed and polluted with their protracted existence.

Take another specimen. Moore is not satisfied with the copious resources of his own imagination—fertile in inexhaustible impurity—he flies to the “integros fontes,” to the French writers. He “pumps for life the putrid well of death.” He disdains not to

translate into English the vilest sillinesses of French epigrams ; for example :

Your mother says, my little Venus,
There's something not correct between us,
And you're as much in fault as I ;
Now, on my soul, my little Venus,
It would not be correct between us,
To let your mother tell a lie.

The poetry of this morceau is as contemptible as its sentiment is disgusting ; one might exclaim with Hector M'Intyre, in the Antiquary, “I vow I have not heard a worse halfpenny ballad ;” yet thus low can Moore descend to the worship of obscenity ; others kneel, but he submits to grovel. Endowed at least with a rich and brilliant imagination, with a power of painting all that is bright and beautiful in *physical* creation, all that is splendid and voluptuous in mortal existence, with a felicitous fluency of versification—“unimitated and unimitable”—with a power of deluging the ear and soul with an inebriating torrent of melody ; with all this, Moore, if I may dare to borrow the application, is willing to “count all things lost” if he “may win” the demon of impurity, “and be found in him ;” as he doubtless will one day, however he may deride the creed that whispers the prediction. I am weary of this vile research ; it is like the loathsome labour of Celia's lover in Swift. I have only to add, that neither time or conscience have arrested the hand, or smitten the heart of Moore. He sings on his song of voluptuousness without any “mitigation or remorse of voice. The “floating brothel,” as Voltaire called the Island of Love in the Lusiad of Camoens, is a nunnery, a temple of vestals, contrasted with the seraglio scenes so vividly painted in the “Veiled Prophet ;” it is a fountain of the nymphs, compared with the loose, luxurious, and triumphant tide of debauchery that overwhelms every page of the description of the “Feast of Roses.”

* Bad grammar is not seldom combined with the outrages of blasphemy.—Vide Paine, *passim*.

I pass on to the next charge—that of jacobinism. I hate the cant of politics. I neither understand or speak it. By jacobinism I mean in general a wanton and wilful defiance of constituted authority on earth, combined (as it always is) with a defiance of that power from which all mortal power is derived; an insulting disregard of “the powers that be;” BECAUSE “those powers are ordained of God,” a refusal alike to render unto Cæsar those things that are Cæsar’s, or to God the things that are God’s: if I were required to find in the writings of Moore the proofs of this spirit, I must answer in the words of the old Calvinistic Scotch woman, who, when asked by an Arminian divine, where she found her favourite doctrine of predestination in the bible, answered “*in every page of it.*” When jacobinical rancour is combined with Popish virulence, the union produces the most deadly compound of human malignity. Power, however constituted, or however existing, becomes the objects of its unmitigated and immitigable hostility.

The rulers of the people must be slandered and vilified, not because they are vicious or weak, despotic or lax, but because they are our rulers. Moore can descend to the vapid vulgarities of the “Twopenny Post-bag,” and the “Fudge Family,” sooner than not “speak evil of dignities.” He abuses the Regent of England for neglecting his wife—he abuses the King of Prussia for being too fond of his wife:—all incongruities must embrace, all contradictions must agree, provided he can abuse a sovereign; that is the grand point, and to that, consistency, principle, feeling, truth, every thing, must be sacrificed; and the true jacobin says, like Lord Richly, in Fielding’s old play, “let them go egad.”

Persons in power must be abused, that is the first article of the jacobinick creed; *they are the loftiest flowers of the garden, they must be cropped first.*

Mr. Moore, who assumes to be a classical scholar, (as a translator of Anacreon,) must understand the allusion. Johnson laughed at Waller’s hope of establishing his claim to immortality on “verses addressed to a lady who could sleep when she pleased:” and “verses addressed to a lady who could do any thing but sleep when she pleased:” but Waller was a rhyming trifler, without intellectual eminence, or any pretension to poetical distinction, except what might be derived from the evanescent glories of his tributes to a Sacharissa and an Amoret. But what shall we say of the man who, possessed of powers that might in their legitimate use encounter half the writers of the day, and deem their defeat but a “puny battle,” rests his claim to immortality on a satire against stays, wigs, and whiskers; and imagines that fame may be obtained by a disgusting expiation on trifles that would disgrace the tattle of a provoked chambermaid, the malice of a discarded governante, or the ribaldry of a disgraced porter.

This man has risen by satire; but what is his satire? That which the object may be proud of. He grasps at the straws on the surface; he spurns the pearls he has not the courage to dive for. I have but two pictures more of Moore to present, and then I have done with him. I have seen him (any one may see him) seated at the piano, surrounded by simpering matrons, some unconscious, some but *too conscious*, of the meaning of his warblings; rank after rank of beautiful unmarried females trembling on the verge of impurity, as they crowded and blushed around their favourite minstrel. I have seen him at *his state dinner* in Ireland, surrounded by the shouting O’Donnells and O’Connells, and all the endless O’s of Irish genealogy, pledging his soul to them in rosy libations of wine for his *patriotism, and proving it by his determined irrevocable absentmindedness; blessed pledge, such as the Irish, when flattered into*

popularity by English readers and English booksellers, never fail to give their country. He expends not during his stay in that country, to which he professes his utter devotion, half the money his intoxicated countrymen lavish on him in one absurdly magnificent feast ; half did I say, the Mendicity Society in Dublin would be rejoiced to receive the money one *individual briefless barrister* mortgages the *profits of a whole term for*, to purchase the honour of dining with Moore, whose only proof of patriotism is robbing the country he has deserted. I have done with him. What can contempt heap further on a man than to call him *what he is* :—a jacobin in politics, an *absentee patriot*, a reckless sensualist in poetry, a practical infidel in religion.—“ Such be thy Gods, oh Israel ! ”—wo, wo to those who bow before them.—*New Monthly Magazine.*

Miscellany.

The following notice of lord Byron, is evidently the production of one who had looked at his works on the dark side. There is, however, so much force in the critique, that our readers will find themselves well rewarded by its perusal.

CRITIQUE ON MODERN POETS.

Qui proficit in literis, deficit tamen in moribus, magis deficit quam proficit.

A just estimate of national morality, it is said, may always be made from the state of national literature. The proposition is not universally true: where literature is thinly diffused, the morals of the country must be measured by another standard; but when a country is in so high a state of civilization, that literature has become an occupation instead of an amusement—when books are so rapidly circulated and so universally read, that half the stock of the nation's ideas are borrowed from its writers—when *men begin to talk more of what is written than of what is done*, and authors come to legislate to our opinions and our passions, *then* the state of our national literature, and the tone of the popular writers, become objects of the deepest interest; for as the people of a country read, so will they feel—and as they feel, so will they act.

It is this circumstance that has forced my attention to the present favourites of literature. I am a man advanced in life, and neither irascible nor jealous, particularly as I have nothing to hope or to fear, to win or to lose. I enter the arena not without emotion, but wholly without anxiety; and in the conflict, I call to the public to “strike—but hear.” I have seen the strong sense and caustic spirit of the writer

of the Baviad employed below their powers to "whip me those vermin," who five-and-twenty years ago stained paper with the "ropy drivel of rheumatic brains," and break on the wheel the butterfly forms of Anna Matilda, Laura Maria, and Della Crusca, cum multis aliis; I have seen the powerful club of the Anti-Jacobin Magazine wielded with resistless effect against the hydra-monster of the German school, and demolish, blow after blow, and every blow a death, all the sprouting imps of the brood, who, in the language of the Darwinian school, "breathed the soft hiss, or tried the fainter yell." But these were like the tormenting insects we brush away in an evening's walk—they tease and they buzz, but there is no strength in their wing, and no lasting venom in their sting; they "come like shadows, so depart." But now I feel like one who, after having got rid of those insects that tormented him, and hoping that the close of his progress may be unmolested, sees to his terror and astonishment a meteor rising above the horizon, "perplexing him with fear of change;" a meteor, the elements of whose orbit are beyond all calculation, whose fiery hair shakes "pestilence," though not war, and who retires troubled and anxious how the night so portentously ushered in may end.

It must be obvious that I allude to lord Byron—a phenomenon to whom the literature of no age can produce a parallel: would that he were not a greater phenomenon, if possible, in the moral than in the intellectual world—would that the inscription which posterity must place on the pedestal to which modern idolatry has raised him, were not to be like that placarded on the statue of Louis XV.: "Sans foi, sans loi, et sans entrailles." I feel his genius—I know his popularity—I know his power. I care not; power, when employed in the cause of evil, only calls for a louder cry of denunciation, if it may be resisted; or of depreciation, if it may be averted. I will say what I think, and let his idolaters *think what they say*. I am aware of the danger I incur in attacking the popular idol; but I heed it not. He is like the image in the dream of the king of Babylon—he is part gold and silver, but part brass and clay—and such an image must fall and be broken in pieces.

Time and morality will deal alternate blows at its perishable frame, like the giant statues with their flails in the visionary adventure of Roderic. The blows of the former are slow; the blows of the lat-

ter are sometimes decisive at once.—What has become of Rochester, and Sedley, and Vanburgh, and Wycherly? Nay, who reads Dryden now without wishing his pages expurgated? *Immoral poetry was never long-lived*. Let the noble writer remember that—and let his admirers remember it too—a brief and forced existence is bestowed on it from the hot-bed of contemporary pruriency of feeling; we wonder at its rapid growth—we are dazzled by its glaring colours—are overcome by its oppressive odour; but we sicken while we praise, and before we have ceased to praise, the object of our admiration has sickened too. There is, I allow, a fearful excess of genius and passion, when united, that obliterates for a moment the distinction between right and wrong, and makes us half believe, that vice so dignified is almost virtue, and virtue so overshadowed almost loses its lustre. But this union of powerful talent and intense feeling is very rare; the Jewish theology distinguished well between the spirits who know most, and the spirits who love most. Lord Byron has no excuse from that dangerous union of mental enthusiasm, and heart-born passion, that may lead far astray the minds of youthful poets when they love, but leaves behind it a glorious and fearful light, like that which follows the erratic path of the meteor.

There is a generous and almost noble vice in that superb devotion, that "proud humility," with which we prostrate ourselves before the object of our earthly adoration; it has (I speak it with reverence) many of the characteristics of true religion; it has the same spirit of self-resignation, of humiliation, of profound abjection of spirit, of an utter prostration of all its powers, mental and bodily, before the idol for whom it is dearer to die than to live for the first object on earth—such is the enthusiasm of youthful passion. Lord Byron has nothing of this; he makes love like a sensualist, or a bandit: he loves only to enjoy, or to ravage; he stoops not to admire the brilliant colours, or to inhale the delicious odour of the flower; if he stoops, it is to crush, to trample, and to destroy; he never remarks or commends one single moral or mental quality in the object of his passion; he appreciates her with all the callous and calculating brutality of a slave-merchant (in the miserable countries in which he wastes his existence,) by her locks that sweep the ground, or her naked feet that outshine the marble; he is a Mahomet (vascillating between lust and ferocity,)

who would grasp the bright locks of his Irene, and strike off her head before his bashaws pour un coup de theatre. The man knows nothing of passion.

There is also a pardonable enthusiasm in youth; the brilliant and seductive colouring with which imagination paints the deformity of life—it is venial—it is almost justifiable to represent it to others in this light.

We have not to fear that the deception will be continued: perhaps we have to fear it may be dispelled too soon. In travelling through the desert of life, if a delirious companion points out to us a *mirage*, and invites us to drink, we cannot but sympathize with the delusion we almost wish to partake of. Reality is equally insufficient for the demands of the imagination and of the heart, and poets, the slaves of both, may be forgiven if they paint with glowing and exaggerated touches a world of their own, a world of *love*, and music, and fragrance—of flowers that steal their balmy spoils from Paradise, and airs that “lap us in Elysium;” and if they dwell too much on the first of these exquisite elements of their Paradise, we pardon them, for we feel that life has already undeceived us, and will soon undeceive them; they will learn that hatred is much more the business of the world than love; that in life, to speak the language of the schools, suffering is the essence, and joy the accident.

Almost the first strains of every poet have been devoted to Love, but his latter, or at least the greater part of his works, are dedicated to Grief. Even the muse of Moore (the loosest of modern poets) has latterly changed her garb and her accent, as the French say, *to throw herself into religion*. It is said she can accommodate herself even to the monotonous psalmodizing of a Hebrew synagogue—can in a fine *la Valiere* style resign the luxuries and magnificence of the court, embellished by her charms, and polluted by her depravity, for the coarse weeds and chilling austerity of a Carmelite penitent; or, to speak in a more awful metaphor, we hope the harlot has converted her dearly bought gains into the *price of the ointment of her conversion*; has bowed at her Saviour’s feet, and wept there, and wiped them with those rich and redundant tresses, so often garnished with meretricious decorations, and displayed as the popular banner around which vice and voluptuousness were summoned to rally—tresses which should have rather streamed like the hair of Berenice, the ornament of earthly loveliness, and the

symbol of celestial invitation—the light of earth, and the star of heaven. Youthful poets have had their errors, but they have had their reformation; the acute susceptibility, and feverish desire of excitement, that led them far astray, was a pledge of their happy return—the pendulum touched by no mortal hand vibrates beyond all mortal calculation, and the writer who set out in his triumphant career of folly, pruriency, and vice, returns from his *alternate oscillation*, purged, purified, and sanctified. None but minds of power can prove these extremes; all minds of power in their turn have proved them; they have erred, and are bid by the voice of man and God to “go and sin no more.” The muse of Byron sets out at once in the extreme; her language is blasphemy, her character misanthropy, her passion hatred, her religion despair. I have before spoken of that desert in which other writers have tried to rear the flower, or to flatter with the *mirage*. The horrors of the desert are not enough for this writer: he aggravates them by breathing over its wilds the icy Sarsar wind of death, and watching in its withering hiss the echoes of that blast which announces the annihilating desolation of his own powerful and blasted mind; in the breath that exhales from his pages, no flower of life can bloom—no verdure can flourish—no animal can live; the heart and its passions, life and its purposes, are alike suspended; nothing of creation can prosper; “the icy air burns fierce, and cold performs the effect of fire.” What becomes of the convert of his poetical creed?—(*poetical creed*, for he has no other)—the victim gazes around him, wonders why, or for what he lives—love is illusion—nature a name—religion a farce—and futurity a jest; the convert bows, believes in—nothing—“dies, and makes no sign.” But “God forgive” the author. In writing of lord Byron, do I dare to deny or depreciate the genius of the first poet of the age? No; I were unworthy to be his meanest reader did I not confess, to his *immortal dishonour* (let not those words be lightly esteemed,) that he is a man whose intellectual powers might, like those of the ancient mathematician, shake the world from its place—God grant he may never find his *πς σω*—or we may tremble for the dissolution of the moral universe. I grant him genius “*beyond the potentiality of intellectual avarice*”; imagination that exhausts worlds, and then imagines new—an eloquence of poetry that might draw after it the third part of heaven’s host, were they

yet untempted—an imperial command of the whole region of poetry from its highest summit to its lowest declivity—an eye, whose reach extending beyond the range described by Shakspeare himself, scorns the restraint of that “proud limitary cherub,” and glances not only from heaven to earth, but from heaven to hell—a felicity, richness, a variety of poetical modulation, for which nothing is too lofty or too low, from the satire to the sonnet, from the epic to the ballad; which can combine and echo in the same lines misanthropy and mirth, levity and despair—that like the satanic host, when assembled in council, can counteract or expand its dimensions at will, can to “smallest forms reduce its shape immense, and be at large”—but still “amid the hall of that infernal court”—where he presides as the master demon—the god of hell—in all the dazzling glory of omnipotent depravity—the mind sinks under the task of eulogizing, or describing, or even imagining the powers of that “man—almighty” who, like his prototype in “Kehama,” plunges from the heaven he has violated, to the hell he has obtained the empire of, and deserves to reign over.

I would accumulate on him every expression that was ever dictated, uttered, or extorted, by the enthusiasm of praise, or the devotion of admiration; but when I had done so, I should feel I had been only heaping coals of fire on his head.

Every talent so depraved becomes a crime; the intellectual powers rise up in judgment against their betrayer; every line (however its echo may be drowned by infatuated praise) has a voice that says, “Why hast thou thus dealt with thy servant?”—praise is the bitterest satire, and admiration a horrible and hollow mockery. I know no exaltation more terrible than intellectual eminence thus seated like the regicides of old in a chair of torture, crowned with a circle of burning metal, and whose anointing turns to poison as it drops on the head of the usurper, while all the subject talents that should “put to their mouths the sounding alchemy,” turning away from the ‘pomp, “plead trumpet tongued against the deep damnation” of their apostate sovereign, and their own abused and prostituted energies.

But I have spoken enough of lord Byron, let him now speak for himself. The end of all poetry is to instruct or to please. He who seeks either from the perusal of lord Byron, must have a singular taste. He must be prepared to look for it in the mingled and chaotic gloom of infidelity, mis-

anthropy, political scepticism, (the unfailing and dangerous companion of both,) and the avowed and ostentatious abandonment of every moral principle, social duty, and domestic feeling—“whatsoever things are pure, are lovely, are of good report—if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” his reader must invert the rule of a writer very different from lord Byron—he must nor “think of these things.” From lord Byron’s own pages I shall select proofs that the charge is not exaggerated. From a poet we expect something to exalt or to delight; we expect that if his subjects be connected with the best interests and feelings of man, his lines shall breathe a lofty spirit of religious devotion, a pure and high love of morality—that they will display all the enthusiasm of patriotism, and the eloquence of passion; that all his public energies will be in their fullest vigour—all his social affections richly harmonized; that the *dulcia vitia* of his lines will rather exaggerate the goods of life than its evils; that his appropriate office will be rather to “open Paradise in the wild,” than to aggravate its sterility, defile its fountains, and blast its rare and infrequent spots of verdure; and that when we have closed his pages, we shall wish that life was what he describes it, or at least think better of what he has described so well.

Is this to be found in the poetry of lord Byron? What shall we think of the religion of him who describes death as

“The first dark day of *nothingness*,
The last of weakness and distress?”

(The best wish, perhaps, that the reader of these withering lines can give the author, is, that *he may find it so*). Take another specimen of lord Byron’s creed from Childe Harold:

“Even gods must yield, *religions take their turn*,
‘Twas Jove’s, ‘tis Mahomet’s, and other creeds
Will rise with other years—till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds.”

Alas! and is there then *no truth*? There is at least one obvious one—that the writer of those lines had no creed, and believed no truth. Take one more specimen, which I almost shudder to trace:

— “The *lyre*,
The only heaven to which earth’s children may aspire.” Childe Harold.

This needs no comment.*

* Also in Harold’s song to “Donna Inez,” the poet speaks of the mark which the “fabled Hebrew wanderer bore.” It is useless, however, to multiply passages to prove what is almost self-evident.

What shall we think of the political principles of the writer whose tergiversation, self-contradiction, and anomalous versatility, put calculation and conjecture to the blush, and make even genius ridiculous? who meanly insults Bonaparte in a lame and halting ode, and then in a *palinode* revives the hopes of his partisans, by the assurance that the violet shall again bloom in their vallies? Abstract principles in politics are, indeed, hardly worth contending for, and historical events become, from the late rapidity with which they have passed before our eyes, remote almost as soon as beheld; and where is the man, except lord Byron, who in the very seat and centre of that most awful struggle in Spain, which he must have witnessed, could write these frigid lines with a hand unshaken and a heart unmoved?

"Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies,
The shouts are France, Spain, Albion, Victory,
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but *ever fights in vain*.

Time has proved the prediction as false as it was then base and soulless; Albion could not fight in vain--her cause went security for her with Heaven, and she has nobly redeemed her debt.

There is a heartlessness about this man, that is the original sin of his poetry--every line represents and forces it on the reader with frightful fidelity. His country was engaged in a conflict unparalleled in magnitude and difficulty; did he aid her by arm, or brain, or pen? Did he wield a sword in her battles? Did he breathe a word in her senate? No: Rome was on fire, and Nero sat playing on his harp. He neither fought her battles, nor eulogized her heroes.

Tyrtæus himself, lame as he was, could animate by his songs those whom he could not lead to battle. What did our modern Tyrtæus? The champions of his country bled, and he joyously smiled.*

I have not done with his political heresies. I repeat, what shall we think of the man who can address a late illustrious personage in the words:

"Weep, daughter of a royal line,
A sire's disgrace, a realm's decay."

* What shall we think of the man who, on viewing the "Talavera's plain," the Golgotha of his fallen countrymen, could, with the heartlessness of a French *philosophe*, and the withering sneer of a demon, address them as—

"Ambition's honoured fools—there let them rot."

Can wipe away his own tears with the same facility with which he scrawled his Jacobin whine, and, on an event which all his countrymen wept with eyes and hearts overflowing, could only produce the hemispherical (half borrowed from Ossian,) —————

"In the dust
The fair-haired daughter of the isles is laid!"

The consistency of his literary principles is the same with that of his political—now eulogizing—now abusing. Does he really imagine that we have forgotten his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers?" or though we have, that Scotland Moore can ever forget it? Yet, on these distinguished writers he has poured abuse as virulent as its retraction was mean: to Moore, under the familiar and colloquial appellative of "my dear Moore," he dedicates one of his poems, no matter which; they are all only lord Byron in various masquing habits, the costume changed—but the same hideous likeness faithfully preserved.

I have done with his want of all religious creed, his desertion of that only anchor of the soul; with his defalcation in all public feeling, or political principle; with his revolting inconsistency in literary opinion.

I pass on to his satire (yes, his satire, for that predominates throughout all his works). Misanthropy is very satirical, and I know no work of lord Byron's that may not properly be termed a satire on religion, morality, social order, or domestic feeling; but *his satire is not satire*; it is only the morbid effusion of universal misanthropy. He lashes not with the hope of causing amendment, but of inflicting pain; the arm is strong, and the scourge is heavy—but there is no benefit in the blow; it might be keenly retorted on him, "strip thy own back."

The genuine satirist selects appropriate subjects, and marks them with discriminating severity. Is this the characteristic of his satire, who, feeling nothing too high for his temerity or his talents, and nothing too low for his malignity, sometimes reviles his sovereign, and sometimes lampoons a scullion?* After this, who will value or dread his ostracism?

A charge still heavier remains against his writings; the noblest intellectual power may suffer eclipse under a passing cloud of scepticism; in the strife of the political warfare, a man may sometimes be seen

* No exaggeration; listen to lord Byron's own account of this miserable quarry of a "falcon towering in his pride of place"—

"Born in a garret, in a kitchen bred?"

among the enemy's ranks, whom we know to be in his heart on the other side. But what writer can assign a cause, (I do not talk of *pleading an excuse*, for that is impossible,) for the predominant impurity of his works, but the predominant depravity of his mind.

The works of lord Byron are just fit to be bound up with those of Cleland and Parny: it is incredible how females can peruse them, or how husbands and fathers can suffer their infamous impurity to shed its venom on the female mind. Look to his *Parisina*—his *Mansfred*—his—look to all he has ever written.

Crime itself appears too vapid for his taste; simple fornication is not enough, it must be seasoned by adultery, by incest, by every loathsome and ineffable combination. Vice, in its unmodified state, is not sufficiently meretricious.

* * * * *

With a reference to the atrocious indecencies of *Don Juan* I shall not pollute my page.

After this, it seems idle to notice lighter defects in lord Byron's compositions; yet while admitting the unquestioned and unquestionable eminence of his genius, I know not any writer whose pages present more frequent instances of violation of every rule of good composition. His rhyme is often harsh, eccentric, and prosaical; if wit be justly defined the discovery of a resemblance between remote objects, no specimen of it occurs in his writings. I know not a single simile or metaphor that ever brought one acquainted with a resemblance unknown before.

He paints from his own mind more than from nature or life; nor from either of the latter does he appear to have learned one beautiful combination, or one powerful contrast. He appears to have looked on nature with the eye of a man who was trying to make the most of a storm, and powerfully depict its thunderings and lightnings; but amidst them he never reverts to the low voice of the Almighty, breaking forth through their terrors, and sending to man his law, even from the mount that burned with fire. His imagery often revolts us by its unexpected vulgarity:

"Devices quaint, and frolics ever new,
Tread on each other's kibes."

His epithets seem selected with wilful absurdity of inappropriateness:

"Young-eyed lewdness"

seems to have been borrowed from the

mock-Darwin poetry of the Anti-Jacobin, where we have—

"Of young-eyed massacres the cherub crew."

I protest I know not which monster is most loathsome; but, I believe, lord Byron's.

There is also a wretched affectation of classical pedantry, which would be disgusting in the theme of a schoolboy. He raves about Parnassus, and "babbles about green fields" in Greece, as if any man in the present enlargement of intellect and diffusion of knowledge need have recourse to a dead language for either instruction or delight. This affectation leads him to unpardonable puerilities of common-place language. War is Mârs, and female patriotism Minerva, and he invokes the *Muse*, and calls the moonlight "pale Hecate's rays;" his Græcomania, seems, however, latterly exchanged for a Turcomania; and the Rose must be "Gul," and the nightingale "Bulbul," and the Moon "Phingari," and his heroines count the beads of a "Comboloio," and fall in love with a "Galiongee." Any thing but a Christian name for lord Byron. "This shows a pitiful ambition in the fool who uses it."

Even amid the richest luxuriance of poetical description, the want of a moral taste withers all its flowers. Moral taste is more closely combined with intellectual taste than lord Byron is disposed to imagine. There is something selfish, physical, and heartless in his enjoyments, as well as his descriptions; and one cannot help feeling revolted by the morbid emasculation of a mind that can abandon the morality and intelligence of England, for the depraved manners and intellectual destitution of that society he can paint so well, because—

"He likes to dine on Beccaficos,"

and would rather encounter a cart laden with grapes, than a wagon filled with the healthful harvest of his country.

I know nothing easier than to compose a poem *a la* Byron: I acknowledge, also, I know nothing more difficult than to array it in the decorations of a genius like his. The recipe is easily made: take a (not) human being, load him with every vice and every evil passion that can deface humanity; if these are not sufficient, (as lord Byron generally seems to think,) borrow as much pride, malignity, and blasphemy, as Satan can afford, if Satan can afford enough; let him have a mistress, (a hero is "better accommodated than with a wife;") but take care that she be the wife of another man—if possible, of his father, or, in default of

that, let her, (in some hemistich that seems to falter at its own meaning,) be *insinuated* to be *his sister*. Observe, let this only be insinuated; let a hint of it be dropt as in "Manfred," by a conscious and terrified domestic; for though lord Byron has brought us to bear fornication in the "Giaour," and "Corsair," adultery in "Mazeppa," and even adulterous incest in "Parisina;" this last outrage of natural and social feeling must be breathed in a hint: brothers else might trample on the pages, and sisters commit them to the flames, unless they were fortified by the previous study of the trial of *the Monster Horne*. Let the hero gnash his teeth, rattle his chains, and if there be a thunder storm to be had, hold them close to the grating of his dungeon, in hopes that the lightning may strike both, and, (as Sancho's wife said when the thunder-bolt fell on the pillory, *on such* may it always light,) let him curse, writhe, and agonize through four cantos, and then make a ranting confession to a priest, (aware of the joke of an atheist confessing to a priest,) like the Giaour; or disappear, nobody knows why, and nobody cares where; like Conrad, or like Manfred, battle with the devil to the last breath, and give him, (as he is well able,) the worst of it after all.

In the progress of the composition, three things must be chiefly attended to as constituting the very essence of the admired prototype—first, *let there be no narrative*; the interest derived from watching the progress of animating events, the opposition of character, or the strife of conflicting interests and passions, must be altogether neglected or effaced; there must be no variations of light and shade, no soft gradations of colouring, no lovely and mingling attenuations of tint, like those of the rainbow, melting into each other, and dissolving and uniting the bright and contracted hues into "one arch of peace;" no, let the whole atmosphere be black, heaven shut out, and earth all darkness; let one predominating tinge of "ebon grain," swallow up every object and every colour, and while genius like his alone, sends a flash across the gloom, let it be like the brilliant and terrific lightning of a midnight storm, that makes darkness more awful, and light itself blasting and horrible.

Secondly, let the essence of the poem, be wholly *physical*—let the females be arrayed in all the meretricious and intoxicating sensuality of the serail, but they must not have one charm of mind, one attraction of virtue—"their large blue eyes,

fair locks, and snowy hands," must be taken at a fair appraisement in lieu of one intellectual trait, one pure feeling, one virtuous energy—if ever they display resolution, let it be in the appropriate and feminine act of murder—while the milder heroines (like Medora) have only to conclude a life of prostitution and outlawry, by lying down to die (on the singular incident of their lovers going out on a piratical expedition) with a bouquet of flowers in their hands, (as it was formerly the custom to equip their less guilty brothers of the gibbet in England,*) and "die in their calling like clever Tom Clinch." Lastly, let it not be possible for the utmost malice of ingenuity to extort a moral from the work—let it be turned and sifted every way, but let the last and hopeless confession of the reader be, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Let the bravoes and the banditti, the harlots and the murdresses, die without remorse, as they have lived without feeling—let them begin in blasphemy and end in despair—let them not show "one compunctionless visiting of nature"—let the heroes, after a course of incestuous adultery, die like Hugo, insulting the parent whom they have violated nature to injure—or let them, in their last hours, contend with the demon whose hideousness is annihilated and lost in the preternatural deformity and turpitude of his victim, who is able to give "bloody instructions" to his teacher, and even to school him out of his own book—and finally, let the reader rise from the page with the conviction that there is nothing new under the sun, since Job's wife has long ago extracted the quintessence of lord Byron's morality, and presented it in four short words: "Curse God and die." As lord Byron perhaps never read the book, he may be forgiven the apparent plagiary.

To imagine a poem so constructed is easy, but to imagine such a being as the author, requires a union of incredibilities that might startle the strongest imagination—we must then try to imagine a man who, while his country is called to a trial more awful than any the page of history exhibits, more interesting to a son of that country than all his darling Greece ever sustained, or had virtuous energy to sustain, stood apart, (with all his pretensions to keen sensibilities and lofty feelings,) and contented himself with sneering in cold-blooded apathy at the patriotism he did not feel, the wisdom he did not possess, and the valour he shrunk from imitating.

* Vide Swift.

Let us try to imagine a man, who, possessed of a genius sublime and unrivalled, delights only in its prostitution, as the ancient king of Lydia found even the beauties of his wife insufficient for his felicity, till he had exhibited her naked charms to his favourite.

Let us try to imagine a man, who, blessed, or (as he would make it out) cursed with all the lavish and glorious opulence of nature, genius and fortune, (powers that rarely unite in their favour,) tramples the pearls under his feet, and malignantly turns to rend the giver—who, bound to life by every tie that can render life lovely or precious—a companion fair and pure—a child—and that child a daughter too—can fling them off—ramble into remote regions with unintellectual harlots, and leave for the consolation of the deserted wife, a satire on a kitchen maid—a man who, enabled and qualified to enjoy, to embellish, and to dignify every scene of polished intercourse, and intellectual luxury, prostitutes his life away amid sceptics and sensualists—a man who, gifted with the finest and most keenly-pointed darts in satire's own quiver, has allowed vice to riot, and folly to revel in his sight unsmitten and unhurt, and reserved their swiftest and sharpest aim only to be directed against religion, patriotism, moral feeling, and conjugal fidelity.

A man who, affecting (and it is but affectation) a superiority that exempts him from chastisement or censure, pretending to be seated in the clouds, far above the lightning and thunder of public opinion, and laughing at their futile explosion, yet shows the wincing of a galled jade at the slightest touch of criticism, and retaliates with a fierceness of invective, a trepidation of jealousy, and an eagerness of mingled rage, fear, and acrimony, that has terrified even the Edinburgh reviewers into submission and praise. Lastly, a man who, “knew he but his happiness, of men the happiest, he,” runs wild about the world, in a fit of misanthropy run mad, and cursed with a satiety of every blessing, tries to make the world believe he is miserable, and to persuade it to be as miserable as himself—if imagination sinks under such a task, the original is to be met with in lord Byron.

I have detained public attention too long with a subject which derives its importance only from its mischief. I have one question to propose to the readers and admirers of lord Byron (the power of his genius has made the terms synonymous)—what man ever rose wiser, better, or happier, from the perusal of his writings?—what female

ever closed his pages strengthened in rectitude, confirmed in chastity, or softened to benevolence? Did man or woman ever carry away from his writings one principle of action, one rule of life, one thought, one image, that might suggest comfort in this life, or hope in the next? I have done with him—I leave his character to the painting of a bold, and one would almost think, a prophetic pen:

He is one whom—“brighter reason prompts to bolder crimes—when *heavenly talents* make *infernal hearts*—that insurmountable extreme of guilt.”

LIVING FRENCH POETS.- NO. II.

De Lamartine.

THE higher order of poetry in France was considered as almost extinct for some time before the fall of Napoleon. The impulse which the Revolution gave to genius is sufficiently attested by its prose productions, its specimens of eloquence, and the progress of painting. But that species of boisterous excitement which inspires the orator and the artist with subjects fitting to such times, and strengthens the faculties in their immediate display, seems the very reverse of that which is most favourable to the poet. His art is pre-eminently one that demands repose. His talent lives on recollections, and grows in retrospect. The images which flit before him escape as soon as observed. They are impalpable, though powerful, and can rarely be described when first conceived. Their presence is as unreal as the shadows of a dream, but the impressions they make sink as deeply in his mind; and it is in leisure and retirement that he embodies forth the notions, the vividness of which is not injured by time. The interval between inspiration and composition is therefore much greater than is commonly supposed; and we think that extempore productions are in most cases but the utterance of ideas long before received. It must be obvious that we do not refuse belief in those improvisatore effusions which are frequent and sometimes good. We do not deny the hurried production of verses possessing considerable merit, nor undervalue the various *pièces de circonstance* for stage or closet; but we speak of the *higher order of poetry*; and glance at, rather than examine, one great cause of its decline in France. Another obviously presents itself, in the slavery that succeeded to the fury of the Revolution. The storms of that event, which rocked the cradle of Despotism, were chilling to the bright but delicate flower of poetry. It opens gladly to the breath of Freedom, but is shrunk and withered by the noxious blast of Tyranny. Every one of the productions under the reign of the Emperor was forced and unseemly. They had, perhaps, the florid bloom of poetry, but it was unhealthy; and what they gained in colouring they lost in perfume.

It is, therefore, but little astonishing that from the days of Delille and Parny until the Restoration, no poet of any eminence appeared in France. But no sooner did that event take place, and political convulsions subside into something like the calm of comparative freedom, than literature resumed its influence; and however political sentiments might vary, there seemed a common accord in relation to poetry. The general feeling was, that it had arisen from its long sleep; that it had returned, as it were, from its term of exile; and that, however little other emigrants had profited by their banishment, it at least had gained new vigour from repose, and came back regenerated and revived. The inspirations of the Muse were deeply and generally felt, and she scattered her favours neither like a niggard nor a partisan. Amongst men of every political opinion she found votaries; and she denied her smiles to no party in the state. Royalists, Republicans, and Constitutionalists produced alike their poets, of various degrees of merit and in different walks of the art; but none took his station on a prouder eminence than Alphonse de Lamartine.

A volume of poetry, the leading qualities of which were religion

without intolerance, piety without cant, and elevation without bombast, was a novelty in France ; but it was still more strange to see a young and ardent author discarding every aid of popular prejudice, and writing to the minds instead of the passions of his countrymen. Such were the "Méditations Poétiques," the title of the book, and M. de Lamartine, its author. This work appeared anonymously in the spring of 1820. Its success was instantaneous, and the name of the author became immediately known. The second edition bore it on the title-page, and it was at once enrolled among those of the most distinguished of the national poets. This success was chiefly the combined effect of the merit and the novelty of the work ; but another principal cause was the strict avoidance of political opinion or allusion. Poetry, purely abstracted and imaginative, spoke to all parties in a tone of feeling, but to none in that of hostility. The aristocratical class of society (and literature was distinguished like it) was satisfied that it had gained a powerful adherent ; while there breathed through the verses of De Lamartine a strain of high and liberal thought, dissipating the doubts suggested by his name, which announced nobility, and his general tone, which savoured so deeply of religion. In thus noticing the feelings of modern France, it is not our intention to enter into the question of their prejudice or their propriety. Political discussion would be misplaced here. But blended as it is with every thing relating to modern French literature, it is impossible to separate allusions to the one from a notice of the other ; and it is too true that nothing is looked on with more distrust by the nation at large than religion as now professed, and nobility as formerly composed.

De Lamartine, thus dear to the hopes of the powerful minority, and not obnoxious to the distrust of the larger, and perhaps the more enlightened, portion of the public, found favour on all hands, and was read only to be admired. His triumph was not gained over party-feelings, to which he was not opposed, but over national prejudices, less virulent, but full as strong ; for he struck with a vigorous hand at the root of chill correctness—that family-tree under the branches of which French poetry had so long reclined. He came to the exercise of his art at home, prepared for it by the study of foreign models. He shewed himself to be well acquainted with the classical authors of antiquity ; and, what was of much more value in the present day, he displayed a deep knowledge, and frequent imitation, of English writers. In this particular point of view he stands at the head of all his contemporaries ; and, even had his talents been less than they are, he would have thus rendered one of the best services to the literature which he in other respects so eminently adorns. We say this without arrogance or even vanity. It is, in fact, but an echo of the general opinion of the best qualified judges among the French themselves ; for while they reject as *outré* and ridiculous the metaphysical extravagance of German poetry, they acknowledge in the boldness of that of England the best model for the enfranchisement of their own. The tribute which M. de Lamartine has thus paid to this country has been returned in the reputation he has acquired among us. A light but well-aimed blow at almost the only part of his "Méditations" open to the assaults of ridicule, retarded for some time our knowledge of his merit ; but from the same source which gave vent to that witty effusion a full

stream of eulogy has lately flowed, and carried away, no doubt, the memory of the attack.*

The biography of our author affords but little food for curiosity or remark. He was born about the year 1790 at Macon, was educated at the college of Belley, and obtained in 1820 the situation of secretary to the French embassy at Naples. In the early part of 1822 he was attached to that at the English court, and occupied the same situation at the period of M. de Chateaubriand's arrival in London. We have heard it remarked by friends of our author, that from some cause unknown to them, the literary ambassador never shewed a great cordiality towards his celebrated subaltern; and it is certain, that on his elevation to the ministry, M. de Lamartine was wholly passed over. He consequently, and by reason of a delicate state of health, lives a life of literary retirement, rarely visiting Paris, and residing chiefly at his old family château of Pierre-Point, in the province of his birth. He keeps utterly apart from all political intrigues, and is of too much moderation in his principles to be ranked with any of the conflicting factions. It was chiefly during the leisure time snatched from his official duties at Naples, that he composed his poems; and he was absent from France at the time when their publication gained him so much fame. They were announced by the Editor as "les premiers essais d'un jeune homme qui n'avait point en les composant le projet de les publier;" but he, nevertheless, ceded to the "advice of his friends," and was one out of a hundred in finding such a course to be a wise one.

Among the most extraordinary, and by far the most interesting, effects of his verses, was the fact of their having captivated the heart of a young English lady of small but independent fortune, who immediately transferred to the author the admiration which his poetry had excited. We must go far back into the history of poetry and real love to find a parallel for this interesting fact, which even there is not furnished by the female sex. In the dawning of French literature we may discover the record of something similar; and the reader of Millot's History of the Troubadours will probably call to mind the adventures of Geoffroi Rudel, who became enamoured of Melinsende Countess of Tripoli, merely from hearing a report of the surpassing beauty which he had never seen. The unfortunate result of his passion has happily no counterpart in the instance we at present relate; for our amiable countrywoman, instead of meeting such tardy sympathy as only came

* We allude to a passing mention of the "Méditations Poétiques," in the Edinburgh Review, soon after their appearance, in which an amusing though rather exaggerated translation was given of the following passage:

Lorsque du Créateur la parole féconde,
Dans une heure fatale, eut enfanté le monde
Des germes du Chaos,
De son œuvre imparfaite il detourna sa face
Et d'un pied dédaigneux le lançant dans l'espace,
Rentra dans son repos.

Which to the air of burlesque in the action attributed to the Deity, adds the absurdity of giving to the All-wise the blame of a bungling mechanic! This was indeed a weak point in the poetry of De Lamartine; but it was the heel of Achilles, and was struck by an arrow from *Paris*.

In No. 74, of the Edinburgh Review, M. de Lamartine is placed, we think justly, at the head of the French living poets.

to join itself to the death-sighs of the hapless Troubadour, received, after a chance-acquaintance formed at Chambery in the South of France, the reward of her affection, in the gratitude and admiration of a faithful husband. She has been for some years united to M. de Lamartine; and for the interests of literature (beyond which we do not presume to touch on these domestic topics) we may be allowed to rejoice in a union, which must advance the poet's knowledge of our language, and do honour to it in strengthening the poetical diction of his own.

In the preface to the "Méditations Poétiques" a continuation of the poems was promised, should those first published meet success. This pledge can be scarcely said to have been redeemed, as only three more short effusions were added in subsequent editions; so that the fame of our author rests at this moment on a thin *brochure*: a new illustration (we hope and believe) of Voltaire's assertion, that a heavy baggage is not necessary to enable an author to reach posterity. Be M. de Lamartine's chance for enduring fame what it may, he at least has the best security for the acceptance of his drafts, in not having exceeded a moderate extent of credit; and if he goes on as he has done hitherto, writing carefully and publishing sparingly, we think he runs little risk of the sentence of his own age being reversed by the time to come. This has pronounced him to be the first of the living poets of France; and we, at least, are well disposed to join our opinions to that oracular decree. His chief title to the first place is in the nature of his subjects, which are generally of the most elevated nature, and which have at once raised him above every reliance on support from the prejudices of mankind; and this distinctive trait is borne out by almost every one of his productions. There is throughout a startling tone of independence—a continued spurning of the trammels of academical rules—a hardy innovation nowhere else to be found in French poetry. His versification is quite original. Unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he never seems to look for models in his own language. His thoughts, in themselves of the boldest range, seek a clothing unknown to the limited formalities of the Academy. The brocaded and touped confinement, assorting well with the habits of a century back, would sit ill upon the muse of De Lamartine. She comes robed in a costume more suited to the region she inhabits. Cities and palaces are not the scenes of her resort. She wanders abroad in fields and forests: plunges into the mysteries of Nature: and sometimes, in a more ethereal ambition, wings her way into illimitable space. It is in flights like these that De Lamartine becomes occasionally vague and vapoury. Out of the sphere of common feelings, we "toil after him in vain;" and it is in his discursive reveries that he partakes the fate of writers of his stamp, who, seeking no sympathy from others, are left to their self-formed solitude.

It is, in fact, a hard effort for common readers, immersed in worldly pursuits and unfit for metaphysical wanderings, to mingle with the poet, whose meditations take so high a range. It requires a rare analogy in spirit to make a fellowship such as this: and did not our author appear before us with the proofs of deep reality in every line, we must in all likelihood attribute to an affected extravagance, much that we are convinced is the honest language of the heart. This is a distinc-

tion that supremely marks the poetry of De Lamartine. It bears the stamp of truth, which never can be counterfeited; and so much is nature evident throughout, that it presents those continual shifting from abstract speculation to familiar feeling, which we apprehend are the best touchstones for distinguishing between art and nature in composition.

Religious sentiment with all its best associations, are the principal features in the “*Méditations Poétiques*.” We find, however, something more soothing to the heart in a tender and impassioned strain of affection, lavished on some real or imaginary object; in sweet descriptions of the face of nature; and many fine passages of sound philosophy. But the piety which blends in those verses with the warmest expression of love, seems to raise the passion to a height too great for common sympathy, and we are apt to think the expression too much refined; that none of the lees remain, which reason tell us to be inseparable from human passion; and from which the purest stream of mortal feeling can never be wholly cleared without being *overstrained*. Tormented unceasingly by the involuntary desire to plunge into the secrets of nature, De Lamartine seems almost always oppressed by a mysterious inquietude. Thus his style is a continued mixture of elevation and melancholy. He has nevertheless contrived to avoid a dangerous rock, on which the reputation of an inferior writer would have infallibly split. In the continual utterance of thoughts relative to an unknown world, and abandoning himself to the language of faith mixed with conjecture, his style never wants precision, nor do his expressions savour of that vagueness which is the very spirit of his subject. His lines are always sonorous and full; and we are frequently astonished to find, on reaching the end, sufficient room for a sentiment or an image which does not, nevertheless, appear to overload the phrase. His rhyme is varied, and generally harmonious; and while among those daring turns which we think his greatest merit, many repetitions and other negligences may be found, his versification has no trace of effort, is highly energetic, rarely inflated, and never common-place.

Having said thus much in the way of general criticism, it now only remains for us to afford some short illustrations of our remarks, in specimens of this author’s productions. The nature of our work, and indeed of our design, limits these within narrow bounds. We shall merely give the *Golfe de Baya*, near Naples, in the original; feeling how inadequate translation is, to afford a perfect exemplar of his style and merits.

Le Golfe de Baya, près de Naples.

“ Vois-tu comme le flot paisible
Sur le rivage vient mourir !
Vois-tu le volage zéphyr
Rider, d’une haleine insensible,
L’onde qu’il aime a parcourir !
Montons sur la barque légère
Que ma main guide sans efforts,
Et de ce golfe solitaire
Rasons timidement les bords.
Loin de nous déjà fuit la rive.
Tandis qu’une main craintive

Tu tiens le docile aviron,
Courbé sur la rame bruyante
Au sein de l'onde frémisante
Je trace un rapide sillon.

Dieu ! quelle fraîcheur on respire !
Plongé dans le sein de Thétis,
Le soleil a cédé l'empire
A la pale reine des nuits.
Le sein des fleurs demi-fermées
S'ouvre, et de vapeurs embaumées
En ce moment remplit les airs ;
Et du soir la brise légère
Des plus doux parfums de la terre
A son tour embaume les mers.

Quels chants sur ces flots retentissent ?
Quels chants éclatent sur ces bords ?
De ces deux concerts qui s'unissent
L'écho prolonge les accords.
N'osant se fier aux étoiles,
Le pêcheur, rpliant ses voiles,
Salut en chantant son séjour.
Tandis qu'une folle joute s'asse
Pousse au ciel des cris d'allégresse,
Et fête son heureux retour.

Mais déjà l'ombre plus épaisse
Tombe et brunit les vastes mers ;
Le bord s'efface, le bruit cesse,
Le silence occupe les airs.
Ce l'heure où la mélancholie
S'asseoit pensive et recueillie
Aux bords silencieux des mers,
Et, méditant sur les ruines,
Contemple au périssant des collines
Ce palais, ces temples déserts.

O de la liberté vieille et sainte patrie !
Terre autrefois féconde en sublimes vertus !
Sous d'indignes Césars maintenant asservie,
Ton empire est tombé ! tes héros ne sont plus !
Mais dans ton sein l'âme agrandie
Croît sur leur monuments respirer leur génie,
Comme on respire encore dans un temple aboli
La Majesté du Dieu dont il étoit rempli.

* * * * *

Colline de Baya ! poétique séjour !
Voluptueux vallon, qu'habita tour-à-tour
Tout ce qui fut grand dans le monde,
Tu ne retentis plus de gloire ni d'amour.
Pas une voix qui me réponde,
Que le bruit plaintif de cette onde,
Ou l'écho réveillé des débris d'alentour !”

Since the above paper was prepared for the press, we have seen two very recent publications from the pen of M. de Lamartine, one entitled *La Mort de Socrate*; the other a second volume of the “Méditations.” He has thus redeemed his pledge; and we can only now observe, that these works have all the characteristic beauties and defects of his first productions—highly imaginative and powerful passages, with lines prosaic and negligent in a remarkable degree. Had we seen these late

poems before our article was written, it would not have caused any variation in the observations there contained ; so we have committed no injustice, either to our author or our readers. One thing has struck us as odd. “La Mort de Socrate” bears on its title-page the name A. Lamartine, the *de*, distinctive of nobility, being left out. We know not what this omission means ; but it is rather curious to see De Béranger preserving this important particle, while he writes a poem (*Le Vilain*) disclaiming all pride in it ; and his contemporary and rival discarding it silently in print, and even, as we have seen, in the signature by his proper hand. De Béranger always omits it in writing his name. It is not, after all, in either case an affair of much moment.

LECTURES ON POETRY. BY T. CAMPBELL.

LECTURE V. PART II.

THE subject of Greek poetry may be treated either by describing its most interesting authors in chronological succession, or by grouping them without regard to time according to their respective classes of composition. There would be several disadvantages in minutely pursuing the latter method. It would call the attention suddenly backwards and forwards to periods of literature far divided from each other; it would require the same names, that have shone in different departments of literature, to be often repeated; and it would demand an accuracy in subdividing the classes of poetry, which, if attainable, would be formal and fatiguing. In reality, such accuracy is far from being perfectly attainable. For though there are certain great walks in Greek literature, the separate tracks and bearings of which can never be confounded; yet the subordinate branchings of those walks have their crossings and contiguities often so much obscured by antiquity, as to be (if we may use the expression) undistinguishable beneath the moss of time. There is one dry duty, indeed, which it is not easy to avoid in attempting to give any satisfactory view of Greek poetry, whatever method may be pursued—namely, that of speaking of many writers whose works have either nearly, or wholly perished, but whose names and characters still survive in the pages of ancient criticism. Even in adopting the method of considering the eminent poets in chronological succession, it will be necessary sometimes to advert to those remote and shadowy reputations. But if one were entirely to pursue the opposite method, and to attempt dividing and subdividing the whole national poetry by its kinds and varieties, it would in that case be necessary to show how every department of it was filled up, and therefore to enter still more minutely and frequently, than upon the other system, into the conjectural character of authors, of whom there are few or no remains. I have preferred therefore the plan of considering the principal poets of Greece individually, and in chronological succession, to that of taking an abstracted and classified view of Greek poetical art.

At the same time there is a certain advantage in classification, which one is unwilling altogether to forego. In travelling for pleasure over the scenes of a fine kingdom, it would be absurd to investigate the boundaries of all its petty divisions; yet it might assist our recollection of its finest scenery to note the outline and comparative aspect of its provinces. I shall therefore offer a short sketch of the classes into which Greek poetry may be generally divided, before I proceed on the simple plan of detail which I have adopted. In this prefatory and bird's-eye view of the subject, I shall avoid, as far as I can, all unnecessary dryness or minuteness. But still let method be ever so useful, it is dry in immediate application; and I am far from feeling myself independent of the reader's patience in this synopsis.

Epic Poetry.—The works of Homer bound our prospect in the ancient history of Greek literature, and may be compared to a mighty eminence, the farther side of which cannot be seen. It is impossible to estimate by what steps, and in how long or short a period, the epic muse had ascended to that summit of excellence. All that appears is, that her subsequent progress was descent. And in a relative sense we

may call the excellence of Homer perfection, not, perhaps, according to abstracted ideas of poetry, for under these might be included a symmetry of design more strict than his, and that Virgilian picturesqueness of expression to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away. But still it is doubtful whether the genius of the Iliad be practically compatible with those minuter graces; and therefore the poem is perfect in its kind without them, considering the impulse and instruction which it affords to the imagination.

Nor does it matter much for our enjoyment of the Iliad what we may think about the history of its composition. Was it improved by the Diascevasts or compilers? They could have only polished its outward form, and could not have infused its internal spirit. Was it the work of many? it must have been that of a consentaneous many—of an age deeply fraught with the power of giving a sweeping interest to poetry, since its separate songs were capable of being adjusted into so harmonious a whole. If it was the work of a school, we must surely suppose some great master of that school. If other hands took up the harp of Homer, they had at least learnt his tune; and if his mantle descended, it appears to have retained its warmth of inspiration.

After and excepting the Iliad and Odyssey, we have no great Greek epic poetry. No relic of the Alexandrian school approaches to the Homeric spirit, and the intermediate epos is of doubtful character. Hesiod's name, whatever he actually wrote, may be collectively taken to designate a mixture of poetry, which had a strong influence, perhaps on the whole unfavourable, on the literature of his country. He was the earliest didactic and sententious poet of Greece, and gave an example of familiar parable even before Æsop.* Whilst he stooped to deliver the humblest instruction in song, he also touched as an epic poet on the wildest subjects of human credulity—on the origin of the universe, and on those combats of heaven with the malevolent invisible powers which have found a place, more or less, in all poetical religious creeds, from the giants of the Hebrew Hell down to Milton's Pandæmonium. The misfortune of Hesiod's works is, that the execution is not equal to the subjects. The supernatural and the natural are melted down into one by the fire of Homer's imagination; but they have no such deceptive blending in Hesiod's representation. His prodigies excite astonishment without sympathy, and altogether he stands at the head of a new epic school of cosmogony and matter-of-fact mythology. Homer is the king of poetry, whilst Hesiod is only its king at arms—the epic herald of the genealogy of gods and goddesses, of heroes and heroines.

Still Hesiod has his bright spots, and was a favourite with antiquity. A tripod which he was said to have obtained in a poetical contest with Homer, was shown on Mount Helicon, in the second century after the Christian era, to the traveller Pausanias. That there was ever a personal competition in song between Homer and Hesiod is certainly not very credible. But some modern theorists† have alleged the tradition to testify a rivalship to have subsisted between the Ascræan and Ionian schools of poetry, and some memorable victory to have been obtained by the former over the latter. I cannot see how the tradition proves any such thing. There was always a rivalship undoubtedly

* In the fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale, in his "Works and Days."

† Proverbs xxi. 16.

‡ Messrs. Böttiger and F. Schlegel.

among the public deliverers of song at the Grecian festivals; but that they were ever pitted against each other in party spirit as Homerists and Hesiodists, there is not a tittle of historical evidence to render probable. It is one thing to suppose that Hesiod may have had his peculiar admirers, reciters, and imitators, and another thing to imagine his school at Delphi sitting up in opposition to the Homeridæ, and disputing with them for the palm of popularity. Wolff* has shown that the Homeric rhapsodists themselves repeated and imitated Hesiod, which looks like any thing in the world but the Homeric and Hesiodic rhapsodists having split into contending sectaries.

True it is that Hesiod's epic taste degenerates from Homer's, and that the latter rhapsodists who imitated Hesiod, although they might recite Homer also and call themselves Homeridæ, are to be widely distinguished from the old and patriarchal Homeridæ of Chios. These, namely, the elder rhapsodists, were either the composers or preservers of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. They gave the world materials which were capable of being moulded by future diascenasts into grand and interesting poems. Hesiod had also his diascenasts, but he has evidently a dry and inharmonious epic character, that would have baffled their efforts to all eternity if they had laboured to compile his works into an animated whole. That the degeneracy of the Hesiodic period, however, was produced by any systematic competition of an anti-Homeric school, is a theory which rests rather infirmly on the basis of the Heliconian tripod.

After Hesiod, and certainly long after Homer, commenced a suite of poets who have been collectively denominated the Cyclic,† who inundated Greece with epic, or at least with historic hexameter verse. Every event alluded to by Homer and Hesiod, and every fable of mythology, became the subject of a poem, till a tissue of versified narrative was at length accomplished by successive hands, which extended from the creation of things to the return of the heroes from Troy and from Chaos to Penelope's bed-chamber.‡ However instructive this Cyclic register of Centaur campaigns, Tlian insurrections, and heroic sieges, older than even the Trojan, might have been to an ancient Greek, a recital of the title of the lost poems which composed it would scarcely be amusing to a modern reader. If he should, however, feel any curiosity on the subject of the Cyclic poets, his longings may be satisfied in Heyné's First Excursus to the second book of the *Aeneid*.

Of the middle epos of Greece, that is of the epic poetry written after Hesiod and before the age of Alexander, we have certainly no data for forming either an universal or perfectly confident judgment. But the silence of Aristotle as to its merits is an unpropitious symptom. Pausanias, it is true, speaks of verses of that period that had been mistaken for Homer's. But of the three most distinguished and later classical epic poets, Pisander,§ who rehearsed the toils of Hercules, is ac-

* Wolffii Prolegg. ad Hom. p. xcvi.

† The term Cyclic has been variously and vaguely applied by the ancients and by classical antiquarians. It is sometimes taken to designate a selection of the best epic poets, made by the Alexandrian critics, which included Homer, Hesiod, Pisander, Panyasis, and Antimachus.

‡ Or, more strictly speaking, to the death of Ulysses.

§ Pisander, of Samirus, in Rhodes, the very old Greek epic poet mentioned by Aristotle, who sang the labours of Hercules, and who first took the liberty of investing the hero with the club and costume of a lion's skin: this Pisander is to be

cused of having been totally without the beauty of epic design; and it a fragment supposed to be his, be rightly ascribed to him,* it will prove him to have possessed no great excellency as a writer. Panyasis, the second of the post-Hesiodic classics, was ranked by some old critics next in merit to Homer; but the word *next* admits of an indefinitely imaginable interval. Handel's bellows-blower thought his services the next to Handel's in musical utility to the church. The works of Antimachus,† the last of the classic epics, a younger contemporary of Plato, were extant in the time of Hadrian, who preferred him to Homer himself. But his imperial majesty was fond of the tumid and obscure. Antimachus's audience, all but Plato, once left him whilst he was reading his verses; and the poet declared that Plato was a sufficient audience. The philosopher's remaining, however, might be the result of politeness or patience as much as of taste, and may almost be suspected to indicate that Antimachus's poetry required a considerable stock of philosophy to be heard to an end.

If ever Pisander and Antimachus, who by all accounts soared like eagles above a rookery, beyond the common-place of Greek Cyclic poetry,‡ were defective in epic harmony, i. e. in interesting arrangement of parts, it is but fair to suppose that the bulk of those Cyclices were mere chroniclers in verse. Hesiod himself betrays the commencement of an historical, and even a chronicling spirit in Greek poetry, like that which pervaded our own for ages both before and after Chaucer. Hesiod's inquisitiveness into remote events, and his love of accumulating legends, gave rise to this bad taste; and his beauties seem to have beguiled the Greeks to endure and adopt it. For dry as he is in detail, he still throws some poetical light and colouring on subjects of awful and mysterious attraction to untutored minds. He traced the secrets of nature back to their imagined source. He epitomized the history of man.

distinguished from another poet of the same name, who lived centuries later in the reign of the Roman Emperor Alexander. The latter Pisander is also ranked under the vague denomination of a Cyclic poet. He was in all probability an imitator of Virgil. Macrobius, chamberlain to the Emperor Theodosius, when he wrote his Saturnalia, appears to have confounded the new and the old Pisander, for he accuses Virgil of copying the latter. Now this could not be the case, for Aulus Gellius has carefully enumerated the writers imitated by Virgil, and never mentions the name of the elder Pisander. Indeed there is a great deal of matter in the second Æneid which Macrobius alleges Virgil to have taken from the old Greek epic, which the elder Pisander could not have known. Any one who peruses Merrick's introduction to his edition and translation of Tryphiodorus's Destruction of Troy, will see it clearly made out, from the collated opinions of the learned, that Macrobius must have been mistaken on this point, however respectable his general authority may be.

* Viz. a fragment of a poem on the Exploits of Hercules, published among the works of Theocritus, but evidently no production of the Sicilian school.

† The fragments that remain of Antimachus of Colophon amount to about one hundred; but, alas, about three-fourths of these fragments are but single verses, and the remainder not much longer. He flourished about the 92d Olympiad. The Alexandrian critics seem to have thought very well of him. Quintilian, though he censures him, speaks of him as a strong writer. The works which it seems most certain that he wrote, were an epic poem on the Siege of Thebes, and a poem in elegiac verse on the Fate of distinguished Heroes who had experienced adversities in Love. It was called Lyde, in honour of a beauty to whom he was attached. The honourable mention of him made by Callimachus, is the most favourable symptom of Antimachus's genius, which, according to his censurers, was prone to obscurity. On the whole, his learning and power give us an idea of a poet not unlike our own Ben Jonson.

‡ Callini Epigr. Brunck. Anal. 461.

He touched very deeply the chord of curiosity in the human breast. What he told the Greeks appears a dream to us, but it was matter of fact and faith to them; and Greece appears to have forgot his faults in gratitude for his imparting what the multitude (at least) probably thought to be profound knowledge.

The history of Greek epic poetry from Hesiod down to the age of Alexander, thus supplies us only with fragments, and titles, and materials for conjecture. Its history after that period shall be the subject of a separate part of these Lectures. In the mean time, I shall revert to a general view of the poetical literature that preceded the Alexandrian school.

Mock-heroic Poetry.—The Greeks were fond of all sorts of parodies, and particularly of those on Homer.* An epic or tragic passage, happily and comically imitated, would set the Athenian theatre in a roar; and even such philosophers as Plato and Diogenes are said to have amused themselves with parodying Homer.† It is absurd to consider parodies as a mark of contempt. They *may be* ill-natured, but they are not necessarily so. One may laugh very heartily at the journeyman conspirator in our own *Tragedy for Warm Weather*, addressing the conclave of master-tailors in the words of Othello, “my very worthy and approved good masters,” without the slightest disparagement to Shakespeare. The taste among the Greeks for parodies that could be enjoyed by the people at large in a theatre, marks their entire familiarity with their best poets; though perhaps it also indicates a shrewd and gay spirit, unlike the romantic feelings of an age of great epic poetry.

It would still, however, be more desirable to possess one authentic mock-heroic of the genuine Attic school, than a hundred works of the serious body of Cyclic poetry. The extant fragments of this burlesque kind of Greek humour are unhappily few and unsatisfactory.‡ Only one of them amounts to an hundred lines, and most of them are exceedingly short. Among the short ones preserved by Athenæus, there is the scrap of an Homericallly described contest between a barber and a potter about the wife of the former, whom the potter wished unjustly to carry away from him. The man of pots is called Pelides, in punning allusion to the Greek word for clay, and the barber also plays upon the similarity of the Greek term for a damsel and for his own vocation. The only considerable fragment of this kind in Athenæus is Matron’s description of an Athenian supper. It begins thus—

“The suppers many and most sumptuous
Which Xenocles, the orator at Athens,
Gave us, O Muse, rehearse—for I went thither,
And braver huge went with me. There we hail’d
The mightiest and most beauteous loaves—more white
Than snow, and sweet to taste as frumenty;
Whose smell would have beguil’d the northern wind
To stop his course, and breathe enamour’d on them.
Matron our host review’d the ranks of men,

* Aristotle, in his Poetics, calls Hegemon the inventor of parodies. Polemo, Athenæus, and others, speak of Hippoanax, a much older poet, (the witty satirist who was chased from Ephesus for making too free with its tyrants,) as the earliest parodist. Possibly Aristotle only meant that Hegemon was the first writer who brought parodies on the stage. † Fabricius, vol. i. p. 550. Ed. Harles, 1790.

‡ I of course exclude the mock-heroic *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, which is ascribed, as I have already mentioned, by the best judges, to the school of Alexandria.

Strode to the threshold to receive his guests,
And halted there. Beside him Chærephon,—
Toad-eater, waited, like a hungry sea-mew,
Skilful to gorge on suppers not his own.
Then came the cooks, and loaded well each table—
The cooks to whom the kitchen's heaven belongs,
With all its turnspit hours, and privilege
To hasten or delay sweet supper time.”

Didactic Poetry.—The Greeks abounded also in didactic poetry. From the accounts and relics of this body of their literature we may gather, that it comprehended religious, moral, and physiological instruction. Probably it for the most part united them; although we find works mentioned by Plato* which must have been didactic poems, of an expressly religious nature, namely, for the direction of sacrifices and purifications. These were evidently the compositions of priests; and whatever philosophy they contained must have been mystic. Indeed both the religion and early philosophy of Greece were deeply infected with mysticism. But still there are traces of very old and simple moral poetry in Greece, calculated to instruct the people in the plain and practical duties of life. Tradition assigns much of this Gnomic poetry to statesmen and philosophers; and we cannot doubt of such public characters having delivered their precepts in verse, whatever we may think of the authenticity of verses ascribed to particular sages. Nor can we wonder that moral proverbs should have been put into verse, when infant science and law itself were tuned to numbers. For, ludicrous as it would be to us to hear of the Statutes at large being set to music, yet the laws of Charondas were publicly sung at the primitive banquets of the Athenians.

The chief of the Gnomic poets were Solon, Theognis, Phocylides, and Pythagoras. The largest extant Gnomic reliques are those ascribed to Theognis, which are obviously a farrago of moral sentences from many different writers, without connexion or consistency of parts. The supposed speaker of the sentiments even changes his existence, and on one occasion exclaims, “I am a beautiful mare,” without deigning to account for his metamorphosis into a quadruped. The greater part of the lines ascribed to Phocylides are also palpable fabrications, and the pious forger has even helped the old Pagan bard to speak like a good Christian about the resurrection. The golden verses of Pythagoras do honour to heathen morality, and may be believed to be classically old, though their having come from Pythagoras himself is at least apocryphal.

Empedocles of Agrigentum seems to have been the first poet of the language who gave its didactic poetry a magnificent and systematic form. He is, unhappily, among the lost writers: since even of his few fragments the whole are not authentic. But his name stands pre-eminent in the history of ancient philosophy and philosophical poetry. His great work on the Nature of things was the object of Cicero’s admiration and of Lucretius’s ardent, and probably imitative regard. “Carmina divini pectoris ejus (says Lucretius) Vociferantur et exponunt præclara reperta, Ut vix humanâ videatur sorte creatus.”

The numbers rolling from his breast divine
Reveal such bold and bright discoveries
That scarce he seems a soul of human birth.

* Plato de Rep. t. vi. p. 221.

Like many other wonderful proficients in early science, he acquired the reputation of a magician who could appease the winds and reanimate the dead. It is amusing to find antiquaries, of no very distant date, labouring to exculpate Empedocles from this heavy charge on his memory.

In my next Lecture I shall finish this synopsis of the classes of Greek poetry.

ART. VII.—LORD BYRON AND THE REVIEWERS.

[The following case will show how completely and how readily a reviewer can change his opinions, when sufficient cause is shown why he should do so, and when threatened with the indignant opposition of the enlightened world.]

1. *Hours of Idleness: A Series of Poems, Original and Translated.*
By GEORGE GORDON, Lord BYRON, a Minor. 8vo. pp. 200.
Newark. 1807. [Edinburgh Review—Jan. 1808.]

THE poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favourite part of his *style*. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case, by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written. Now, the law upon the point of minority we hold to be perfectly clear. It is a plea available only to the defendant; no plaintiff can offer it as a supplementary ground of action. Thus, if any suit could be brought against Lord Byron, for the purpose of compelling him to put into court a certain quantity of poetry; and if judgment were given against him; it is highly probable that an exception would be taken, were he to deliver *for poetry*, the contents of this volume. To this he might plead *minority*; but as he now makes voluntary tender of the article, he hath no right to sue, on that ground, for the price in good current praise, should the goods be unmarketable. This is our view of the law on the point, and, we dare to say, so will it be ruled. Perhaps, however, in reality, all that he tells us about his youth, is rather with a view to increase our wonder, than to soften our censures. He possibly means to say, ‘See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen, and this by one of only sixteen!’ —But, alas, we all remember the poetry of Cowley at ten, and Pope at twelve; and so far from hearing, with any degree of surprise, that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college, inclusive, we really believe this to be the most common of all occurrences; that it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

His other plea of privilege, our author rather brings forward in order to waive it. He certainly, however, does allude frequently to his family and ancestors—sometimes in poetry, sometimes in notes; and while giving up his claim on the score of rank, he takes care to remember us of Dr. Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only, that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our review, beside our desire to counsel him that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.

With this view, we must beg leave seriously to assure him, that the mere rhyming of the final syllable, even when accompanied by the presence of a certain number of feet; nay, although (which does not always happen) those feet should scan regularly, and have been all counted accurately upon the fingers,—is not the whole art of poetry. We would entreat him to believe, that a certain portion of liveliness, somewhat of fancy, is necessary to constitute a poem; and that a poem in the present day, to be read, must contain at least one thought, either in a little degree different from the ideas of former writers, or differently expressed. We put it to his candour, whether there is any thing so deserving the name of poetry in verses like the following, written in 1806, and whether, if a youth of eighteen could say any thing so uninteresting to his ancestors, a youth of nineteen should publish it. [After such a commencement, to introduce nothing worse than these beautiful stanzas, shows at once the difficulty to be overcome by the sinister disposition of the critic.]

'Shades of heroes, farewell! your descendant, departing
From the seat of his ancestors, bids you adieu!
Abroad, or at home, your remembrance imparting
New courage, he'll think upon glory, and you.

Though a tear dim his eye at the sad separation,
'Tis nature, not fear, that excites his regret:
Far distant he goes, with the same emulation;
The fame of his fathers he ne'er can forget.

That fame and that memory still will he cherish,
He vows that he ne'er will disgrace your renown;
Like you will he live, or like you will he perish;
When decay'd, may he mingle his dust with your own.' p. 3.

Now, we positively do assert, that there is nothing better than these stanzas in the whole compass of the noble minor's volume.

Lord Byron should also have a care of attempting what the greatest poets have done before him, for comparisons (as he must have had occasion to see at his writing master's) are odious.—Gray's Ode on Eton College, should really have kept out the ten

hobbling stanzas ‘on a distant view of the village and school of Harrow.’

‘Where fancy, yet, joys to retrace the resemblance
Of comrades, in friendship and mischief allied;
How welcome to me, your ne’er fading remembrance,
Which rests in the bosom, though hope is denied.’—p. 4.

In like manner, the exquisite lines of Mr. Rogers, ‘*On a Tear*,’ might have warned the noble author off those premises, and spared us a whole dozen such stanzas as the following.

‘Mild Charity’s glow,
To us mortals below,
Shows the soul from barbarity clear; [&c. two stanzas.]

And so of instances in which former poets had failed. Thus, we do not think Lord Byron was made for translating, during his nonage, Adrian’s Address to his Soul, when Pope succeeded so indifferently in the attempt. If our readers, however, are of another opinion, they may look at it.

‘Ah! gentle, fleeting, wav’ring sprite, [&c.]

However, be this as it may, we fear his translations and imitations are great favourites with Lord Byron. We have them of all kinds, from Anacreon to Ossian; and, viewing them as school exercises, they may pass. Only, why print them after they have had their day and served their turn? And why call the thing in p. 79 a translation, where two words ($\thetaελω λεγειν$) of the original are expanded into four lines, and the other thing in p. 81, where $\muεσονυχτοις ποθ ο γαις$, is rendered by means of six hobbling verses?—As to his Ossianic poesy, we are not very good judges, being, in truth, so moderately skilled in that species of composition, that we should, in all probability, be criticising some bit of the genuine Macpherson itself, were we to express our opinion of Lord Byron’s rhapsodies. If, then, the following beginning of a ‘Song of bards,’ is by his Lordship, we venture to object to it, as far as we can comprehend it. ‘What form rises on the roar of clouds, whose dark ghost gleams on the red stream of tempests? His voice rolls on the thunder; ’tis Orla, the brown chief of Otihana. He was,’ &c. After detaining this ‘brown chief’ some time, the bards conclude by giving him their advice to ‘raise his fair locks;’ then to ‘spread them on the arch of the rainbow;’ and ‘to smile through the tears of the storm.’ Of this kind of thing there are no less than nine pages; and we can so far venture an opinion in their favour, that they look very like Macpherson; and we are positive they are pretty nearly as stupid and tiresome. [Here he allows him a species of talent, because it belongs to a species which the Critic dislikes.]

It is a sort of privilege of poets to be egotists; but they should ‘use it as not abusing it;’ and particularly one who piques himself (though indeed at the ripe age of nineteen) of being ‘an infant bard,’—(‘The artless Helicon I boast is youth,’)—should either

not know, or should seem not to know, so much about his own ancestry. Besides a poem above cited on the family seat of the Byrons, we have another of eleven pages, on the self-same subject, introduced with an apology, ‘he certainly had no intention of inserting it;’ but really, ‘the particular request of some friends,’ &c. &c. It concludes with five stanzas on himself, ‘the last and youngest of a noble line.’ There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin-y-gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learnt that *pibroch* is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle.

As the author has dedicated so large a part of his volume to immortalize his employment at school and college, we cannot possibly dismiss it without presenting the reader with a specimen of these ingenious effusions. In an ode with a Greek motto, called *Granta*, we have the following magnificent stanzas.

[Here are quoted stanzas VIII. XI. XII. and XIII. out of the 25 of *GRANTA*.]

We are sorry to hear so bad an account of the college psalmody as is contained in the following Attic stanzas.

[Stanzas XX. and XXI. of the same.]

But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thorough-bred poets; and ‘though he once roved a careless mountaineer in the Highlands of Scotland,’ he has not of late enjoyed this advantage. Moreover, he expects no profit from his publication; and whether it succeeds or not, ‘it is highly improbable, from his situation and pursuits hereafter,’ that he should again condescend to become an author. Therefore, let us take what we get and be thankful. What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are all well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord’s station, who does not live in a garret, ‘but has the sway’ of Newstead Abbey. Again, we say, let us be thankful; and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth.

[The young Lord appears to have anticipated this castigation, by the following stanzas—which may, indeed, have provoked it.

‘Poor LITTLE! sweet, melodious bard!

Of late esteem’d it monstrous hard,

That he, who sang before all;

He who the lore of love expanded,

By dire Reviewers should be branded,

As void of wit and moral.^a

^a ‘These stanzas were written soon after the appearance of a severe critique in a Northern Review, on a new publication of the British Anacreon.’

And yet, while Beauty's praise is thine,
Harmonious favourite of the nine!

Repine not at thy lot;
Thy soothing lays may still be read,
When Persecution's arm is dead,
And critics are forgot.

Still, I must yield those worthies merit,
Who chasten, with unsparing spirit,
Bad rhymes, and those who write them;
And though myself may be the next,
By critic sarcasm to be vexed,
I really will not fight them.^a

Perhaps, they would do quite as well,
To break the rudely sounding shell

Of such a young beginner;
He, who offends at pert nineteen,
Ere thirty may become, I ween,
A very harden'd sinner.] (*Hours of Idleness.*)

a 'A Bard, (Horresco referens,) defied his reviewer to mortal combat.'

2. ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS; A SATIRE.

[BY LORD BYRON.]

I had rather be a kitten and cry mew!
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers. *Shakspeare.*

Such shameles bards we have; and yet 'tis true,
There are as mad, abandon'd critics too. *Pope.*

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

' ALL my friends, learned and unlearned, have urged me not to
' publish this Satire with my name. If I were to be "turned from
' the career of my humour by quibbles quick, and paper bullets of
' the brain," I should have complied with their counsel. But I am
' not to be terrified by abuse, or bullied by reviewers, with or with-
' out arms. I can safely say that I have attacked none *personally*
' who did not commence on the offensive. An author's works are
' public property; he who purchases may judge, and publish his
' opinion if he pleases: and the authors I have endeavoured to
' commemorate may do by me as I have done by them: I dare say
' they will succeed better in condemning my scribblings, than in
' mending their own. But my object is not to prove that I can
' write well, but, if possible, to make others write better.'

[Remarks upon alterations and additions.]

‘ With regard to the real talents of many of the poetical persons whose performances are mentioned, or alluded to, in the following pages, it is presumed by the author that there can be little difference of opinion in the public at large ; though, like other sectaries, each has his separate tabernacle of proselytes, by whom his abilities are overrated, his faults overlooked, and his metrical canons received without scruple and without consideration. But the unquestionable possession of considerable genius by several of the writers here censured, renders their mental prostitution more to be regretted. Imbecility may be pitied, or, at worst, laughed at and forgotten ; perverted powers demand the most decided reprehension. No one can wish more than the author, that some known and able writer had undertaken their exposure ; but Mr. GIFFORD has devoted himself to MASSINGER, and, in the absence of the regular physician, a country practitioner may, in cases of absolute necessity, be allowed to prescribe his nostrum to prevent the extension of so deplorable an epidemic, provided there be no quackery in his treatment of the malady. A caustic is here offered, as it is to be feared nothing short of actual cautery can recover the numerous patients afflicted with the present prevalent and distressing *rabies* for rhyming. As to the Edinburgh *Reviewers*, it would, indeed, require a Hercules to crush the Hydra ; but if the author succeeds in merely “ bruising one of the heads of the serpent,” though his own hand should suffer in the encounter, he will be amply satisfied.’

‘ STILL must I hear ?—shall hoarse ^a FITZGERALD bawl
His creaking couplets in a tavern hall,
And I not sing, lest, haply, Scotch reviews
Should dub me scribbler and denounce my Muse ?
Prepare for rhyme—I’ll publish, right or wrong :
Fools are my theme, let Satire be my song.’

‘ When Vice triumphant holds her sovereign sway,
And men through life her willing slaves obey ;
When Folly, frequent harbinger of crime,
Unfolds her motley store to suit the time ;
When knaves and fools combined o’er all prevail,
When justice halts, and right begins to fail,
E’en then the boldest start from public sneers,
Afraid of shame, unknown to other fears,
More darkly sin, by Satire kept in awe,
And shrink from ridicule though not from law.’

^a Mr. Fitzgerald, facetiously termed by Cobbett the ‘ Small Beer Poet,’ inflicts his annual tribute of verses on the ‘ Literary Fund ;’ not content with writing, he spouts in person after the company have imbibed a reasonable quantity of bad port, to enable them to sustain the operation.

'The cry is up, and scribblers are my game :
Speed Pegasus !—ye strains of great and small,
Ode ! Epic ! Elegy !—have at you all !
I, too, can scrawl, and once upon a time
I poured along the town a flood of rhyme,
A school-boy freak, unworthy praise or blame ;
I printed—older children do the same.
'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print ;
A book's a book, although there's nothing in't.
Not that a Title's sounding charm can save
Or scrawl or scribbler from an equal grave :
This LAMBE must own, since his Patrician name
Failed to preserve the spurious Farce from shame.^a
No matter, GEORGE continues still to write,^b
Though now the name is veiled from public sight.
Moved by the great example, I pursue
The self-same road, but make my own review :
Not seek great JEFFREY's, yet like him will be
Self-constituted judge of Poesy.

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save Censure,—Critics all are ready made.
Take—hackneyed jokes from Miller, got by rote,
With just enough of learning to misquote ;
A mind well skilled to find or forge a fault,
A turn for punning, call it Attic salt ;
To JEFFREY go, be silent and discreet,
His pay is just ten sterling pounds per sheet :
Fear not to lie, 'twill seem a lucky hit,
Shrink not from blasphemy, 'twill pass for wit ;
Care not for feeling—pass your proper jest,
And stand a critic hated yet caressed.

And shall we own such judgment ? no—as soon
Seek roses in December—ice in June ;
Hope constancy in wind, or corn in chaff,
Believe a woman, or an epitaph,
Or any other thing that's false, before
You trust in critics who themselves are sore ;
Or yield one single thought to be misled
By JEFFREY's heart, or LAMBE's Bœotian head.^c

^a This ingenious youth is mentioned in another place.

^b In the Edinburgh Review.

^c Messrs. Jeffrey and Lambe are the Alpha and Omega, the first and last of the Edinburgh Review ; the others are mentioned hereafter. [In another note mentioning the admirers of Wordsworth, he sets down "Messrs. Lambe and Lloyd, the most ignoble followers of Southey & Co."]

To these young tyrants, by themselves misplaced,
Combined usurpers on the throne of Taste;
To these when authors bend in humble awe
And hail their voice as truth, their word as law:
While these are censors, 'twould be sin to spare;
While such are critics, why should I forbear?
But yet so near, all modern worthies run,
'Tis doubtful whom to seek, or whom to shun;
Nor know we when to spare, or where to strike,
Our bards and censors are so much alike.

Then should you ask me, why I venture o'er
The path, which POPE and GIFFORD trod before?
If not yet sickened, you can still proceed;
Go on; my rhyme will tell you as you read.

Time was, ere yet in these degenerate days
Ignoble themes obtained mistaken praise,
When Sense and Wit with Poesy allied,
No fabled Graces, flourished side by side.'

The author advert's to POPE's pure strain, to DRYDEN's song, to CONGREVE's and to OTWAY's scenes, and asks,—

‘ But why these names, or greater still, retrace,
When all to feebler bards resign their place?’

He proceeds to sing, with little discretion, of WALTER SCOTT, whose—

‘ Lays of Minstrels—may they be the last!—
On half-strung harps whine mournful to the blast.’

And the following are from twenty lines which he bestows on “Marmion:”

‘ And think'st thou, SCOTT! by vain conceit perchance,
On public taste to foist thy stale romance,^a
Though MURRAY with his MILLER may combine
To yield thy muse just half-a-crown per line?
No! when the sons of song descend to trade,
Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade.
Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame.’

On SOUTHEY he commences as follows;—

‘ With eagle pinion soaring to the skies,
Behold the ballad-monger SOUTHEY rise!’

a Marion, the hero of this romance, is exactly what William of Deloraine would have been, had he been able to read and write. The poem was manufactured for Messrs. Constable, Murray, and Miller, worshipful booksellers, in consideration of the receipt of a sum of money, and truly, considering the inspiration, it is a very creditable production.

And subjoins three couplets on the “Joan of Arc”—and on
“Thalaba” five : the latter he calls—

- ‘ Domdaniel’s dread destroyer, who o’erthrew
More mad magicians than the world e’er knew.
Immortal Hero ! all thy foes o’ercome,
For ever reign—the rival of Tom Thumb !’
- ‘ Well might triumphant Genii bear thee hence,
Illustrious conqueror of common sense !’

Speaks of “Madoc” as a tale ‘ more cold than Mandeville’s’—
and ridicules the Berkley Ballads.

- ‘ Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple WORDSWORTH,—
- ‘ Who, both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose,
Convincing all by demonstration plain,
Poetic souls delight in prose insane.’

* * *

- ‘ Shall gentle COLERIDGE pass unnoticed here,
To turgid ode, and tumid stanza dear ?’
- ‘— None in lofty numbers can surpass
The Bard who soars to eulogize an ass.
How well the subject suits his noble mind !
“ A fellow feeling makes us wond’rous kind.” ’

From nine couplets to M. G. LEWIS, we select these.

- ‘ Oh ! wonder-working LEWIS ! Monk, or Bard,
Who fain would’st make Parnassus a churchyard !’
- ‘ All hail, M. P.!^a from whose infernal brain
Thin sheeted phantoms glide, a grisly train.’
- ‘ With “ small gray men,”—“ wild yagers,” and what not,
To crown with honour, thee, and WALTER SCOTT :’

He next has these beautiful lines on the early poetry of MOORE ;—

- ‘ Who in soft guise, surrounded by a choir
Of virgins melting, not to Vesta’s fire,
With sparkling eyes, and cheeks by passion flushed,
Strikes his wild Lyre, whilst listening dames are hushed !
’Tis LITTLE ! young Catullus of his day,
As sweet, but as immoral in his lay !
Grieved to condemn, the Muse must still be just,
Nor spare melodious advocates of lust.
Pure is the flame which o’er her altar burns ;
From grosser incense with disgust she turns :

^a “ For every one knows little Matt’s an M. P.”—See a Poem to Mr. Lewis, in The Statesman, supposed to be written by Mr. Jekyll.

Yet, kind to youth, this expiation o'er,
She bids thee "mend thy line and sin no more."

Of the translator of Camoens, he writes,—beside eight lines more—

'Hibernian STRANGFORD! with thine eyes of blue,^a
And boasted locks of red or auburn hue,
Whose plaintive strain each love-sick Miss admires,
And o'er harmonious fustian half expires.'

'Cease to deceive; thy pilfered harp restore,
Nor teach the Lusian Bard to copy MOORE.'

Of the lines he devotes to HALEY, are the following;—

'Triumphant first see "Temper's Triumphs" shine!
At least I'm sure they triumphed over mine.
Of "Music's Triumphs" all who read may swear
That luckless Music never triumphed there.'^b

He says of GRAHAME, who wrote "Sabbath Walks"—and "Biblical Pictures"—that he—

'Breaks into blank the Gospel of St. Luke,
And boldly pilfers from the Pentateuch;
And, undisturbed by conscientious qualms,
Perverts the Prophets, and purloins the Psalms.'

He addresses fifty lines to BOWLES, the author of Sonnets, &c.—of "the Spirit of Discovery"—'a very spirited and pretty dwarf epic,'—and Editor of Pope's works,—whom he calls—

'The maudlin prince of mournful sonneteers.
And art thou not their prince, harmonious BOWLES!
Thou first great oracle of tender souls?'

'Delightful BOWLES! still blessing, and still blest,
All love thy strain, but children like it best.
'Tis thine with gentle LITTLE's moral song,
To sooth the mania of the amorous throng!
With thee our nursery damsels shed their tears.
Ere miss, as yet, completes her infant years.'

'If POPE, whose fame and genius from the first
Have foiled the best of critics, needs the worst,
Do thou essay; each fault, each failing scan;
The first of poets was, alas! but man!'

a The reader, who may wish for an explanation of this, may refer to "Strangford's Camoens," page 127, note to page 56, or to the last page of the Edinburgh Review of Strangford's Camoens. It is also to be remarked, that the things given to the public as Poems of Camoens, are no more to be found in the original Portuguese, than in the Song of Solomon.

b He has also written much Comedy in rhyme, Epistles, &c. &c. As he is rather an elegant writer of notes and biography, let us recommend Pope's Advice to Wycherly, to Mr. H.'s consideration; viz. "to turn his poetry into prose," which may be easily done by taking away the final syllable of each couplet.

Rake from each ancient dunghill every pearl,
Consult lord FANNY, and conside in CURLL.^a
Let all the scandals of a former age
Perch on thy pen, and flutter o'er thy page ;'

' Write, as if St. John's soul could still inspire,
And do from hate, what MALLET did for hire.^b

On the next poet he has the following lines, with twice as many more,—

' Bœotian COTTLE, rich Bristowa's boast,
Imports old stories from the Cambrian coast,
And sends his goods to market—all alive !
Lines forty thousand ; cantos twenty-five !'

' If Commerce fills the purse, she clogs the brain,
And AMOS COTTLE strikes the lyre in vain.'

' Oh ! AMOS COTTLE !—Phœbus ! what a name
To fill the speaking trump of future fame !'^c

' A ponderous quarto upon the beauties of "Richmond Hill" and the like' by MAURICE,—he calls—

' Smooth, solid monuments of mental pain !
The petrifactions of a plodding brain,'

Of MONTGOMERY, he sweetly sings,—

' With broken lyre and cheek serenely pale,
Lo ! sad ALCÆUS wanders down the vale !
Though fair they rose, and might have bloomed at last,
His hopes have perished by the northern blast :
Nipped in the bud by Caledonian gales,
His blossoms wither as the blast prevails !'

' A coward brood, which mangle as they prey,
By hellish instinct, all that cross their way :
Aged or young, the living or the dead,
No mercy find,—these harpies must be fed.
Why do the injured unresisting yield
The calm possession of their native field ?
Why tamely thus, before their fangs retreat,
Nor hunt the bloodhounds back to ARTHUR's seat?^d

a Curll is one of the heroes of the Dunciad, and was a bookseller. Lord Fanny is the poetical name of lord Hervy, author of "Lines to the Imitator of Horace."

b Lord Bolingbroke hired Mallet to traduce Pope, after his decease, because the poet had retained some copies of a work by lord Bolingbroke, (The Patriot King,) which that splendid, but malignant genius, had ordered to be destroyed.

c Mr. Cottle, Amos, or Joseph, I don't know which, but one or both, once sellers of books they did not write, but now writers of books that do not sell, have published a pair of Epics. "Alfred" (poor Alfred ! Pye has been at him too !) "Alfred" and the "Fall of Cambria."

d Arthur's seat ; the hill which overhangs Edinburgh.

Health to immortal JEFFREY ! once, in name,
England could boast a judge almost the same :
In soul so like, so merciful, yet just,
Some think that Satan has resigned his trust,
And given the spirit to the world again,
To sentence letters, as he sentenced men.
With hand less mighty, but with heart as black,
With voice as willing to decree the rack ;
Bred in the courts betimes, though all that law
As yet hath taught him is to find a flaw.
Since well instructed in the patriot school
To rail at party, though a party tool,
Who knows ? if chance his patrons should restore
Back to the sway they forfeited before,
His scribbling toils some recompense may meet
And raise this DANIEL to the judgment seat.
Let JEFFRIES' shade indulge the pious hope,
And greeting thus, present him with a rope :
“ Heir to my virtues ! man of equal mind !
“ Skilled to condemn as to traduce mankind,
“ This cord receive ! for thee reserved with care
“ To wield in judgment, and at length to wear.”

Health to great JEFFREY ! Heaven preserve his life,
To flourish on the fertile shores of Fife,
And guard it sacred in his future wars,
Since authors sometimes seek the field of Mars !
Can none remember that eventful day,
That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,
When LITTLE's leadless pistol met his eye,
And Bow-street myrmidons stood laughing by ?
Oh ! day disastrous ! on her firm set rock,
Dunedin's castle felt a secret shock ;
Dark rolled the sympathetic waves of Forth,
Low groaned the startled whirlwinds of the north ;
Tweed ruffled half his waves to form a tear,
The other half pursued its calm career ;^b
ARTHUR's steep summit nodded to its base,
The surly Tolbooth scarcely kept her place ;

a In 1806, Messrs. Jeffrey and Moore met at Chalk-Farm. The duel was prevented by the interference of the magistracy ; and, on examination, the balls of the pistols, like the courage of the combatants, were found to have evaporated. This incident gave occasion to much wagery in the daily prints.

b The Tweed here behaved with proper decorum ; it would have been highly reprehensible in the English half of the river to have shown the smallest symptom of apprehension.

The Tolbooth felt—for marble sometimes can
On such occasions feel as much as man—
The Tolbooth felt defrauded of his charms,
If JEFFREY died, except within her arms :^a
Nay, last not least, on that portentous morn
The sixteenth story where himself was born,
His patrimonial garret fell to ground,
And pale Edina shuddered at the sound :

‘ But Caledonia’s goddess hovered o’er
The field, and saved him from the wrath of MOORE ;’
‘ “ My son,” she cried, “ ne’er thirst for gore again,
“ Resign the pistol, and resume the pen ;
“ O’er politics and poesy preside,
“ Boast of thy country, and Britannia’s guide !
“ For long as Albion’s heedless sons submit,
“ Or Scottish taste decides on English wit,
“ So long shall last thine unmolested reign,
“ Nor any dare to take thy name in vain.
“ Behold a chosen bard shall aid thy plan,
“ And own thee chieftain of the critic clan.
“ First in the ranks illustrious shall be seen
“ The Travelled Thane ! Athenian Aberdeen.^b
“ HERBERT shall wield THOR’s hammer,^c and sometimes
“ In gratitude thou’lt praise his rugged rhymes.
“ Smug SYDNEY^d too thy bitter page shall seek,
“ And classic HALLAM^e much renowned for Greek.

^a This display of sympathy on the part of the Tolbooth, (the principal prison in Edinburgh,) which truly seems to have been most affected on this occasion, is much to be commended. It was to be apprehended, that the many unhappy criminals executed in the front, might have rendered the edifice more callous. She is said to be of the softer sex, because her delicacy of feeling on this day was truly feminine, though, like most feminine impulses, perhaps a little selfish.

^b His Lordship has been much abroad, is a Member of the Athenian Society, and Reviewer of “ Gell’s Topography of Troy.”

^c Mr. Herbert is a translator of Icelandic and other poetry. One of the principal pieces is a “ Song on the Recovery of Thor’s Hammer ;” the translation is a pleasant chant in the vulgar tongue.

^d The Rev. Sydney Smith, the reputed author of Peter Plymley’s Letters, and sundry criticisms.

^e Mr. Hallam reviewed Payne Knight’s Taste, and was exceedingly severe on some Greek verses therein ; it was not discovered that the lines were Pindar’s till the Press rendered it impossible to cancel the critique, which still stands an everlasting monument of Hallam’s ingenuity.—(The said Hallam is incensed, because he is falsely accused, seeing that he never dined at Holland House.—If this be true, I am sorry—not for having said so, but on his account, as I understand his lordship’s feasts are preferable to his compositions.—If he did not review Lord Holland’s performance, I am glad, because it must have been painful to read, and irksome to praise it. If Mr. Hallam will tell me who did review it, the real name shall find a place in the text, provided nevertheless

“ SCOTT may perchance his name and influence lend,
“ And paltry PILLANS^a shall traduce his friend.
“ While gay Thalia’s luckless votary LAMBE,^b
“ As he himself was damned, shall try to damn.
“ Known be thy name, unbounded be thy sway !
“ Thy HOLLAND’s banquets shall each toil repay ;
“ Yet mark one caution, ere thy next Review
“ Spread its light wings of Saffron and of Blue,
“ Beware lest blundering BROUGHAM^c destroy the sale,
“ Turn beef to bannocks, cauliflowers to kail.”
Thus having said, the kilted goddess kist
Her son, and vanished in a Scottish mist.’^d

‘ Blest be the banquets spread at Holland House,
Where Scotchmen feed, and critics may carouse !’
Dunedin ! view thy children with delight,
They write for food, and feed because they write :^e
And lest, when heated with the unusual grape,
Some glowing thoughts should to the press escape,
And tinge with red the female reader’s cheek,
My lady skims the cream of each critique ;
Breathes o’er the page her purity of soul,
Reforms each error and refines the whole.^f

the said name be of two orthodox musical syllables, and will come into the verse ; till then, Hallam must stand for want of a better.)

^a Pillans is a tutor at Eton.

^b The honourable G. Lambe reviewed “ Beresford’s Miseries,” and is moreover author of a farce enacted with much applause at the Priory, Stanmore ; and damned with great expedition at the late Theatre, Covent-Garden. It was entitled “ Whistle for It.”

^c Mr. Brougham, in No. XXV. of the Edinburgh Review throughout the article concerning Don Pedro de Cevallos, has displayed more politics than policy : many of the worthy burgesses of Edinburgh being so incensed at the infamous principles it evinces, as to have withdrawn their subscriptions.—(It seems that Mr. Brougham is not a Pict, as I supposed, but a Borderer ; and his name is pronounced Broon, from Trent to Tay :—So be it.)

^d I ought to apologize to the worthy deities, for introducing a new goddess with short petticoats to their notice : but, alas ! what was to be done ? I could not say Caledonia’s Genius, it being well known there is no Genius to be found from Clackmannan to Caithness ; yet without supernatural agency, how was Jeffrey to be saved ? The national “ Kelpies,” &c. are too unpoetical, and the “ Brownies” and “ gude neighbours” (spirits of a good disposition) refused to extricate him. A goddess, therefore, has been called for the purpose, and great ought to be the gratitude of Jeffrey, seeing it is the only communication he ever held, or is likely to hold, with any thing heavenly.

^e Lord H. has translated some specimens of Lope de Vega, inserted in his Life of the author : both are bepraised by his disinterested guests.

^f Certain it is, her ladyship is suspected of having displayed her matchless wit in the Edinburgh Review : however that may be, we know, from good authority, that the manuscripts are submitted to her perusal—no doubt for correction.

He next turns to the Drama of London, and sings of 'DIBDIN's nonsense,' of REYNOLD's "dammes," "poohs," and "zounds,"—of 'HOOK, CHERRY, SKEFFINGTON, and Mother GOOSE'—of 'NALDI's face' and CATALINI's pantaloons'—of the 'enrapturing GAYTON,' 'the lively PRESLE'—'ANGIOLINI's pliant toe,' and 'COLLINI's song':—then of the Institutions of GREVILLE and ARGYLE rooms;—

'Where yon proud palace, Fashion's hallowed fane,
Spreads wide her portals for the motley train,'

'The song from Italy, the step from France,
The midnight orgy, and the mazy dance,
The smile of beauty, and the flush of wine,
For sops, fools, gamesters, knaves, and lords combine.'

* * * *

'As for the smaller fry, who swarm in shoals
From silly HAFIZ^a up to simple BOWLES,
Why should we call them from their dark abode,
In broad St. Giles's, or in Tottenham Road?

'Lords too are bards, such things at times befall,
And 'tis some praise in peers to write at all.
Yet, did or Taste or Reason sway the times,
Ah! who would take their titles with their rhymes?'

To Lord Carlisle the author has dedicated the second edition of his youthful 'poems, original and translated,' in these words:—
"To the Right Honourable FREDERICK, EARL OF CARLISLE, Knight of the Garter, &c. &c., the second Edition of these Poems is inscribed, by his obliged Ward, and affectionate Kinsman, THE AUTHOR." And now he bestows on the Earl the following, with as many more, verses—those omitted being the most severe and personal.

'No Muse will cheer, with renovating smile,
The paralytic puling of CARLISLE:'

'So dull in youth, so drivelling in his age,
His scenes alone had damned our sinking stage;
But managers, for once, cried "hold, enough!"
Nor drugged their audience with the tragic stuff.
Yet at their judgment let his lordship laugh,
And case his volumes in congenial calf.'

'With you, ye Druids! rich in native lead,
Who daily scribble for your daily bread;

^a What would be the sentiments of the Persian Anacreon, Hafiz, could he rise from his splendid sepulchre at Sheeraz, where he reposes with Ferdousi and Sadi, the oriental Homer and Catullus, and behold his name assumed by one Stott of Dromore, the most impudent and execrable of literary poachers for the daily prints?

With you I war not: GIFFORD's heavy hand
Has crushed, without remorse, your numerous band.

' Let Monodies on Fox regale your crew,
And Melville's Mantle^a prove a blanket, too!
One common Lethe waits each hapless bard,
And peace be with you ! 'tis your best reward.'

' Far be't from me unkindly to upbraid
The lovely Rosa's prose in masquerade,
Whose strains, the faithful echoes of her mind,
Leave wondering comprehension far behind.^b

‘ To the famed throng now paid the tribute due,
Neglected Genius ! let me turn to you.

Come forth, oh! CAMPBELL !^c give thy talents scope ;
Who dares aspire if thou must cease to hope ?

And thou, melodious Rogers ! rise at last,
Recall the pleasing memory of the past ;'

' What ! must deserted Poesy still weep
Where her last hopes with pious CowPER sleep ?
Unless, perchance, from his cold bier she turns,
To deck the turf that wraps her minstrel, BURNS !'

' Yet still some genuine sons 'tis hers to boast,'

' Bear witness GIFFORD, SOTHEBY, and MACNEIL.^d

‘ Unhappy WHITE !^e while life was in its spring,
And thy young Muse just waved her joyous wing,
The spoiler came ; all, all thy promise fair
Has sought the grave, to sleep for ever there.
Oh ! what a noble heart was here undone,
When Science' self destroyed her favourite son !'

^a Melville's Mantle, a parody on "Elijah's Mantle," a poem.

^b This lovely little Jessica, the daughter of the noted Jew, K——, seems to be a follower of the Della Crusca school, and has published two volumes of very respectable absurdities in rhyme, as times go; besides sundry novels, in the style of the first edition of the Monk.

^c It would be superfluous to recall to the mind of the reader the authors of "The Pleasures of Memory" and "The Pleasures of Hope," the most beautiful didactic poems in our language, if we except Pope's Essay on Man: but so many poetasters have started up, that even the names of Campbell and Rogers are become strange.

^d Gifford, author of the Baviad and Mæviad, the first satires of the day, and translator of Juvenal.

Sotheby, translator of Wieland's Oberon, and Virgil's Georgics, and author of Saul, an epic poem.

Macneil, whose poems are deservedly popular: particularly "Scotland's Scaith, or the Waes of War," of which ten thousand copies were sold in one month.

^e Henry Kirke White died at Cambridge in October, 1806, in consequence of too much exertion in the pursuit of studies that would have matured a mind which disease and poverty could not impair, and which death itself destroyed rather than subdued.

‘ ‘Tis true, that all who rhyme, nay, all who write,
Shrink from that fatal word to genius,—Trite ;
Yet Truth sometimes will lend her noblest fires,
And decorate the verse herself inspires :
This fact in Virtue’s name let CRABBE attest,
Though Nature’s sternest painter, yet the best.’

‘ And here let SHEE^a and genius find a place,
Whose pen and pencil yield an equal grace ;
• Whose magic touch can bid the canvass glow ;
Or pour the easy rhyme’s harmonious flow.’

‘ Blest is the man ! who dares approach the bower
Where dwelt the Muses at their natal hour ;
Whose steps have pressed, whose eye has marked afar,
The clime that nursed the sons of song and war,’
‘ WRIGHT !^b ’twas thy happy lot at once to view
Those shores of glory, and to sing them too.’

‘ And you, associate bards ! who snatched to light
Those gems too long withheld from modern sight ;
Whose mingling taste combined to cull the wreath
Where Attic flowers Aonian odours breathe,
And all their renovated fragrance flung,
To grace the beauties of your native tongue.’
‘ But not in flimsy DARWIN’s pompous chime,
That mighty master of unmeaning rhyme ;’
‘ Him let them shun, with him let tinsel die :
False glare attracts, but more offends the eye.^c’

The author is here disposed to retrieve the character of his judgment upon the poetry of SCOTT—and though he deprecates ‘ the vile foray of a bordering clan,’ and ‘ Marmion’s acts of darkness,’ he does high honour to the Scotchman’s genius.

‘ And thou, too, SCOTT ! resign to minstrels rude
The wilder slogan of a border feud :
Let others spin their meagre lines for hire ;
Enough for genius if itself inspire !
Let SOUTHEY sing, although his teeming Muse,
Prolific every spring, be too profuse ;

^a Mr. Shee, author of “ Rhymes on Art,” and “ Elements of Art.”

^b Mr. Wright, late consul-general for the seven islands, is author of a very beautiful poem just published : it is entitled, “ Horæ Ionicæ,” and is descriptive of the Isles and the adjacent coast of Greece.

^c The translators of the Anthology have since published separate poems, which evince genius that only requires opportunity to attain eminence.

^d The neglect of the “ Botanic Garden,” is some proof of returning taste : the scenery is its sole recommendation.

Let simple WORDSWORTH chime his childish verse,
And brother COLERIDGE lull the babe at nurse ;
Let spectre-mongering LEWIS aim, at most,
To rouse the galleries, or to raise a ghost ;
Let MOORE be lewd ; let STRANGFORD steal from MOORE,
And swear that CAMOENS sang such notes of yore ;
Let HAYLEY hobble on ; MONTGOMERY rave ;
And godly GRAHAME chant a stupid stave ;
Let sonnetteering BOWLES his strains refine,
And whine and whimper to the fourteenth line ;'
' But thou, with powers that mock the aid of praise,
Should'st leave to humbler bards ignoble lays :
Thy country's voice, the voice of all the Nine
Demand a hallowed harp—that harp is thine.'
' Scotland ! still proudly claim thy native bard,
And be thy praise his first, his best reward !
Yet not with thee alone his name should live,
But own the vast renown a world can give ;
Be known, perchance, when Albion is no more,
And tell the tale of what she was before ;
To future times her faded fame recall,
And save her glory, though his country fall.'

He says the Muse flies the press soiled 'with rhyme by HOARE,
and epic blank by HOYLE ;' not him of whist, whose "Games" are
not to be superceded by the vagaries of his namesake ;—and with
the doggerel of CLARKE,

' A would-be satirist, a hired buffoon,'
' Condemned to drudge, the meanest of the mean,
And furbish falsehoods for a magazine.'^a
' Oh dark asylum of a Vandal race !^b
At once the boast of Learning, and disgrace ;
So sunk in dulness and so lost in shame
That SMYTHE and HODGSON^c scarce redeem thy fame !'
' But where fair Isis rolls her purer wave,—

^a This person, who has lately betrayed the most rapid symptoms of confirmed authorship, is writer of a poem denominated the "Art of Pleasing," as "lucus a non lucendo," containing little pleasantry and less poetry. He also acts as monthly stipendiary and collector of calumnies for the Satirist. If this unfortunate young man would exchange the magazines for the mathematics, and endeavour to take a decent degree in his university, it might eventually prove more serviceable than his present salary.

^b "Into Cambridgeshire the emperor Probus transported a considerable body of Vandals."—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, page 83, vol. 2.

^c This gentleman's name requires no praise : the man who in translation displays unquestionable genius, may well be expected to excel in original composition, of which it is to be hoped we shall soon see a splendid specimen.

‘ There RICHARDS wakes a genuine poet’s fires,
And modern Britons justly praise their sires.’^a
‘ Let vain VALENTIA^b rival luckless CARR,
And equal him whose work he sought to mar;
Let ABERDEEN and ELGIN^c still pursue
The shade of Fame through regions of Virtu;’
‘ Of Dardan tours, let Dilettanti tell,
I leave topography to classic GELL ;^d
‘ This thing of rhyme I ne’er disdained to own—
Though not obtrusive, yet not quite unknown,
My voice was heard again, though not so loud,
My page, though nameless, never disavowed,
And now at once I tear the veil away :—
Cheer on the pack ! the quarry stands at bay,
Unscared by all the din of MELBOURNE house ;—
* * *

‘ EDINA’s brawny sons and brimstone page.
Our men in buckram shall have blows enough,
And feel they too are “ penetrable stuff :”
And though I hope not hence unscathed to go,
Who conquers me, shall find a stubborn foe.
The time hath been, when no harsh sound would fall
From lips that now may seem imbued with gall
Nor fools nor follies tempt me to despise
The meanest thing that crawled beneath my eyes ;
But now so callous grown, so changed since youth,
I’ve learned to think, and sternly speak the truth ;
Learned to deride the critic’s starch decree,
And break him on the wheel he meant for me ;
To spurn the rod a scribbler bids me kiss,
Nor care if courts and crowds applaud or hiss :
Nay more, though all my rival rhymsters frown,
I too can hunt a poetaster down :

^a The “ Aboriginal Britons,” an excellent poem by Richards.

^b Lord Valentia (whose tremendous travels are forthcoming with due decorations, graphical, topographical, and typographical) deposed, on Sir John Carr’s unlucky suit, that Dubois’s satire prevented his purchase of the “ Stranger in Ireland.”—Oh sye, my lord, has your lordship no more feeling for a fellow tourist? but “ two of a trade,” they say, &c.

^c Lord Elgin would fain persuade us, that all the figures, with or without noses, in his stone-shop, are the work of Phidias ; “ Credat Judæus !”

^d Mr. Gell’s Topography of Troy and Ithaca cannot fail to ensure the approbation of every man possessed of classical taste, as well for the information Mr. G. conveys to the mind of the reader, as for the ability and research the respective works display.

And, armed in proof, the gauntlet cast at once
To Scotch marauder, and to Southern dunce.
Thus much I've dared to do ; how far my lay
Hath wronged these righteous times, let others say :
This, let the world, which knows not how to spare,
Yet rarely blames unjustly, now declare.

POSTSCRIPT.

I HAVE been informed, since the present edition went to the press, that my trusty and well beloved cousins, the Edinburgh Reviewers, are preparing a most vehement critique on my poor, gentle, *unresisting Muse*, whom they have already so bedeviled with their ungodly ribaldry.

“Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ !”

I suppose I must say of JEFFREY as Sir ANTHONY AGRICHEEK saith : “An I had known he was so cunning of fence, I had seen him damned ere I had fought him.” What a pity it is that I shall be beyond the Bosphorus before the next number has passed the Tweed. But I yet hope to light my pipe with it in Persia.

My northern friends have accused me with justice, of personality towards their great literary Anthropophagus, JEFFREY ; but what else was to be done with him and his dirty pack, who feed by “lying and slandering,” and slake their thirst by “evil speaking ?” I have adduced facts already well known, and of JEFFREY’s mind I have stated my free opinion, nor has he thence sustained any injury ;—what scavenger was ever soiled by being pelted with mud ? It may be said that I quit England because I have censured there “persons of honour and wit about town ;” but I am coming back again, and their vengeance will keep hot till my return. Those who know me can testify that my motives for leaving England are very different from fears, literary or personal ; those who do not, may one day be convinced. Since the publication of this thing, my name has not been concealed ; I have been mostly in London, ready to answer for my transgressions, and in daily expectation of sundry cartels ; but, alas ! “the age of chivalry is over,” or, in the vulgar tongue, there is no spirit now-a-days.

There is a youth ycleped HEWSON CLARKE (subaudi, Esquire) a sizer of Emmanuel college, and I believe a denizen of Berwick upon Tweed, whom I have introduced in these pages to much better company than he has been accustomed to meet : he is, notwithstanding, a very sad dog, and for no reason that I can discover, except a personal quarrel with a bear, kept by me at Cambridge to sit for a fellowship, and whom the jealousy of his Trinity cotemporaries prevented from success, has been abusing me, and what is worse, the defenceless innocent above mentioned, in the Satirist, for one year and some months. I am utterly unconscious of having given him any provocation ; indeed, I am guiltless of having heard his name till coupled with the Satirist. He has therefore no reason to complain, and I dare say that, like Sir FRETFUL PLAGIARY, he is rather *pleased* than otherwise. I have now mentioned all who have done me the honour to notice me and mine, that is, my bear and my book, except the editor of the Satirist, who it seems is a gentleman, God wot ! I wish he could impart a little of his gentility to his subordinate scribblers. I hear that Mr. JERNINGHAM is about to take up the cudgels for his Mæcenas, Lord CARLISLE ; I hope not ; he was one of the few, who, in the very short intercourse I had with him, treated me with kindness when a boy, and whatever he may say or do, “pour on, I will endure.” I have nothing further to add, save

a general note of thanksgiving to readers, purchasers, and publisher, and in the words of SCOTT, I wish

" To all and each a fair good night,
" And rosy dreams and slumbers light."

The following very judicious remarks, upon this Satire, are from the *Analectic Magazine*, of July, 1814.

" The poem was intrinsically excellent, possessing much of the terseness and vigour of Roman satire; and though he lay about him with an unsparing hand, and often cut down where he should merely have lopped off, still, we think, the garden of poetry would be wonderfully benefited by frequent visitations of the kind. The most indifferent part of the poem is that where the author meant to be most severe; his animadversions on the critics have too much of pique and anger; the heat of his feelings has taken out the temper of his weapon; and when he mentions Jeffrey he becomes grossly personal, and sinks beneath the dignity of his muse. Whatever may have been the temporary pain of the application, we think Lord Byron was benefited by the caustic of criticism. He was entering into literature with all the lulling advantages of a titled author; a strong predisposition on the part of [English] society to admire; and none of those goads to talent that stimulate poor and obscure aspirers after fame, whose only means of rising in society is by the vigorous exertion of their talents. His lordship might, therefore, have slipped quietly into the silken herd of "persons of quality," who have from time to time scribbled ['divers reams of most orthodox, imperial nonsense' to be cased in 'volumes of congenial calf']—had not the rough critic of the north given a salutary shake to his nerves, and provoked him to the exertion of his full and masculine talent."

It must be remembered that a reviewer is excited by private aims, and warmed by ambition, as positively as the author of a separate work; that they are equally aspirers to the applause of the public, and equally amenable to that tribunal, which can give the only sure and the only final decision; and, though Reviewers have acquired the character of judges, that they are not free, in the discharge of such duties, from other responsibility than that to the silent opinion of the world.—We publish the attack of a poet, upon the editors of a 'Critical Journal,'—and their condemnation of a writer of 'poems,'—as of the same legitimate authority. That part of a retort which is entirely personal, can only be palliated by the necessity of making an Editor, by profession, more severely responsible, for the many critiques of unknown writers, by his personal as well as his literary standing.—The censure of Byron's

youthful poems was entirely unqualified,—though many of the pieces have the finest feeling and beauty of poetry. Some poems of the collection must have been written when he was but fifteen years of age; and certainly the whole gave the evidence of great promise. The ambition of many a young poet of equal promise, would have been suppressed for ever by the effect of such a lashing; and we may have lost many a *Giaour*, and *Corsair* and excellent *Canto*, by such trifling and misjudging pleasantry. Byron himself would not have recovered his confidence if he had not given play to his indignant spirit, in this anonymous publication; and we never should have heard *CHILDE HAROLD* sing, had not the applause attending this *Satire*, given boldness to his ambition. (See the Retrospective Review on *DENNIS*, in the next article.)

3. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. A Romaunt.* By Lord BYRON. 4to. pp. 230. London, 1812. [*Edinburgh Review*, Feb. 1812.]

[It will be well to premise an extract from a paper appended as a note to this *Romaunt*,—dated at ‘*Athens, Franciscan Convent, 1811.*’]

“I must have some talk with this learned Theban.”

‘SOME time after my return from Constantinople to this city I received the thirty-first number of the Edinburgh Review as a great favour, and certainly at this distance an acceptable one, from the captain of an English frigate off Salamis. In that number, Art. 3. containing the Review of a French translation of Strabo, there are introduced some remarks on the modern Greeks and their literature, with a short account of Coray, a co-translator in the French version.’....He goes on to speak of ‘Coray, the most celebrated of living Greeks, at least among the Franks, who was born in Scio,’ (not, he thinks, in Smyrna, as stated in the Review,) and of Polyzois, ‘who is stated by the Reviewer to be the only modern, except Coray, who has distinguished himself by a knowledge of Hellenic; if he be the Polyzois Lampanitzotes of Yanina, who has published a number of editions in Romaic, he was neither more nor less than an itinerant vender of books; a man utterly destitute of scholastic acquirements.’

‘I cannot but observe that the Reviewer’s lamentation over the fall of the Greeks appears singular, when he closes it with these words: “*the change is to be attributed to their misfortunes rather than to any physical degradation.*” It may be true that the Greeks are not physically degenerated, and that Constantinople contained on the day when it changed masters as many men of six feet high and upwards as in the hour of prosperity; but

' ancient history and modern politics instruct us that something more than physical perfection is necessary to preserve a state in vigour and independence, and the Greeks in particular, are a melancholy example of the near connexion between moral degradation and national decay.'

' There is a slip of the pen, and it can only be a slip of the pen, in p. 58. No. 31, of the Edinburgh Review, where these words occur.—“ We are told that when the capital of the East yielded to *Solyman*”—It may be presumed that this last word will, in a future edition, be altered to *Mahomet II.*^a The “ ladies of Constantinople,” it seems, at that period, spoke a dialect, “ which would not have disgraced the lips of an Athenian.” I do not know how that might be, but am sorry to say the ladies in general, and the Athenians in particular, are much altered: being far from choice either in their dialect or expressions, as the whole Attic race are barbarous to a proverb :

“ Ω Αθηνα προὶν χωρα
Τι γαιδαρες τρεθεις τωρα.”

' The Albanians speak a Romaic as notoriously corrupt as the Scotch of Aberdeenshire, or the Italian of Naples. In Yanina, where, next to the Fanal, the Greek is purest, and beyond Delvinachi in Albania Proper up to Argyrocastro and Tepaleen (beyond which I did not advance) they speak worse Greek than even the Athenians.'

' The reviewer proceeds, after some remarks on the tongue in its past and present state, to a paradox (page 59) on the great mischief the knowledge of his own language has done to Coray, who, it seems, is less likely to understand the ancient Greek, because he is perfect master of the modern! This observation follows a paragraph, recommending, in explicit terms, the study of the Romaic, as “ a powerful auxiliary,” not only to the traveller, and foreign merchant, but also to the classical scholar; in short, to

a ' In a former number of the Edinburgh Review, 1808, it is observed : " Lord B. passed some of his early years in Scotland, where he might have learned that *pibroch* does not mean a *bagpipe*, any more than *duet* means a *fiddle*." Query,—Was it in Scotland that the young gentleman of the Edinburgh Review learned that *Solyman* means *Mahomet II.* any more than *criticism* means *infallibility*?—but thus it is,

“ Cædimus inque vicem præbemus crura sagittis.”

' The mistake seemed so completely a lapse of the pen (from the great similarity of the two words and the total absence of error from the former pages of the literary leviathan) that I should have passed it over as in the text, had I not perceived in the Edinburgh Review much facetious exultation on all such detections, particularly a recent one where words and syllables are subjects of disquisition and transposition; and the above-mentioned parallel passage in my own case irresistibly propelled me to hint how much easier it is to be critical than correct. The gentlemen, having enjoyed many a triumph on such victories, will hardly begrudge me a slight oration for the present.'

' every body except the only person who can be thoroughly acquainted with its uses : and by a parity of reasoning, our old language is conjectured to be probably more attainable by " foreigners" than by ourselves ! Now I am inclined to think, that a Dutch Tyro in our tongue (albeit himself of Saxon blood) would be sadly perplexed with " Sir Tristram," or any other given " Auchinleck MS." with or without a grammar or glossary, and to most apprehensions it seems evident, that none but a native can acquire a competent, far less complete, knowledge of our obsolete idioms. We may give the critic credit for his ingenuity, but no more believe him than we do Smollet's Lismahago, who maintains that the purest English is spoken in Edinburgh. That Coray may err is very possible ; but if he does, the fault is in the man rather than in his mother tongue, which is, as it ought to be, of the greatest aid to the native student.—Here the Reviewer proceeds to business on Strabo's translators, and here I close my remarks.]

' I have endeavoured to waive the personal feelings, which rise in despite of me in touching upon any part of the Edinburgh Review ; not from a wish to conciliate the favour of its writers, or to cancel the remembrance of a syllable I have formerly published, but simply from a sense of the impropriety of mixing up private resentments with a disquisition of the present kind, and more particularly at this distance of time and place.']

LORD BYRON has improved marvellously since his last appearance at our tribunal ;—and this, though it bear a very affected title, is really a volume of very considerable power, spirit and originality—which not only atones for the evil works of his nonage, but gives promise of a further excellence hereafter; to which it is quite comfortable to look forward.

The most surprising thing about the present work, indeed, is, that it should please and interest so much as it does, with so few of the ordinary ingredients of interest or poetical delight. There is no story or adventure—and, indeed, no incident of any kind ; the whole poem—to give a very short account of it—consisting of a series of reflections made in travelling through a part of Spain and Portugal, and in sailing up the Mediterranean to the shores of Greece. These reflections, too, and the descriptions out of which they arise, are presented without any regular order or connexion —being sometimes strung upon the slender thread of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, and sometimes held together by the still slighter tie of the author's local situation at the time of writing. As there are no incidents, there cannot well be any characters ;—and accordingly, with the exception of a few national sketches, which form part of the landscape of his pilgrimage, that of the hero him-

self is the only delineation of the kind that is offered to the reader of this volume;—and this hero, we must say, appears to us as oddly chosen as he is imperfectly employed. Childe Harold is a sated epicure—sickened with the very fulness of prosperity—oppressed with ennui, and stung with occasional remorse;—his heart hardened by a long course of sensual indulgence, and his opinion of mankind degraded by his acquaintance with the baser part of them. In this state he wanders over the fairest and most interesting parts of Europe, in the vain hope of stimulating his palsied sensibility by novelty, or at least of occasionally forgetting his mental anguish in the toils and perils of his journey. Like Milton's fiend, however, he 'sees, undelighted, all delight,' and passes on through the great wilderness of the world with a heart shut to all human sympathy,—sullenly despising the stir both of its business and its pleasures—but hating and despising himself most of all for beholding it with so little emotion.

Lord Byron takes the trouble to caution his readers against supposing that he meant to shadow out his own character under the dark and repulsive traits of that which we have just exhibited; a caution which was surely unnecessary—though it is impossible not to observe, that the mind of the noble author has been so far tinged by his strong conception of this Satanic personage, that the sentiments and reflections which he delivers in his own name, have all received a shade of the same gloomy and misanthropic colouring which invests those of his imaginary hero. The general strain of those sentiments, too, is such as we should have thought very little likely to attract popularity, in the present temper of this country. They are not only complexionally dark and disdainful, but run directly counter to very many of our national passions, and most favoured propensities. Lord Byron speaks with the most unbounded contempt of the Portuguese—with despondence of Spain—and in a very slighting and sarcastic manner of wars, and victories, and military heroes in general. Neither are his religious opinions more orthodox, we apprehend, than his politics; for he not only speaks without any respect of priests, and creeds, and dogmas of all descriptions, but doubts very freely of the immortality of the soul, and other points as fundamental.

Such are some of the disadvantages under which this poem lays claim to the public favour; and it will be readily understood that we think it has no ordinary merit, when we say, that we have little doubt that it will find favour, in spite of these disadvantages. Its chief excellence is a singular freedom and boldness, both of thought and expression, and a great occasional force and felicity of diction, which is the more pleasing that it does not appear to be the result either of long labour or humble imitation. There is, indeed, a tone of self-willed independence and originality about the whole

composition—a certain plain manliness and strength of manner, which is infinitely refreshing after the sickly affectations of so many modern writers ; and reconciles us not only to the asperity into which it sometimes degenerates, but even in some degree to the unamiableness upon which it constantly borders. We do not know, indeed, whether there is not something *piquant* in the very novelty and singularity of that cast of misanthropy and universal scorn, which we have already noticed as among the repulsive features of the composition. It excites a kind of curiosity, at least, to see how objects, which have been usually presented under so different an aspect, appear through so dark a medium ; and undoubtedly gives great effect to the flashes of emotion and suppressed sensibility that occasionally burst through the gloom. The best parts of the poem, accordingly, are those which embody those stern and disdainful reflections, to which the author seems to recur with unfeigned cordiality and eagerness—and through which we think we can sometimes discern the strugglings of a gentler feeling, to which he is afraid to abandon himself. There is much strength, in short, and some impetuous feeling in this poem—but very little softness ; some pity for mankind—but very little affection ; and no enthusiasm in the cause of any living men, or admiration of their talents or virtues. The author's inspiration does not appear to have brought him any beatific visions, nor to have peopled his fancy with any forms of loveliness ; and though his lays are often both loud and lofty, they neither 'lap us in Elysium,' nor give us any idea that it was in Elysium that they were framed.

The descriptions are often exceedingly good ; and the diction, though unequal and frequently faulty, has on the whole a freedom, copiousness and vigour, which we are not sure that we could match in any cotemporary poet. Scott alone, we think, possesses a style equally strong and natural ; but Scott's is more made up of imitations, and indeed is frequently a mere cento of other writers—while Lord Byron's has often a nervous simplicity and manly freshness which reminds us of Dryden, and an occasional force and compression, in some of the smaller pieces especially, which afford no unfavourable resemblance of Crabbe.

The versification is in the stanza of Spencer ; and none of all the imitators of that venerable bard have availed themselves more extensively of the great range of tones and manners in which his example entitles them to indulge. Lord Byron has accordingly given us descriptions in all their extremes ;—sometimes compressing into one stanza the whole characteristic features of a country, and sometimes expanding into twenty the details of a familiar transaction ;—condescending, for pages together, to expatiate in minute and ludicrous representations,—and mingling long apostrophes, execrations, and the expressions of personal emotion, with the mis-

cellaneous picture which it is his main business to trace on the imagination of his readers. Not satisfied even with this license of variety, he has passed at will, and entirely, from the style of Spencer, to that of his own age,—and intermingled various lyrical pieces with the solemn stanza of his general measure.

[The Reviewer proceeds to designate the striking and meritorious parts of this poem in detail]—the farewell ballad to his native country, in which there are some strong and characteristic stanzas—the view of Lisbon, and the Portuguese landscape, are given with considerable spirit;—the marking features of the latter are well summed up [Stanza XIX. Canto I.]—The description of the upland frontier by which he enters Spain, is striking and vigorous. [Stanza XXXI.]—After this comes a spirited invocation to the genius of Spain, and her ancient idol of Chivalry; followed by a rapid view of her present state of devastation; which concludes with a bold personification of Battle.

‘Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deep’ning in the sun,
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon.’

The passages [Stanzas XLI. XLII. XLIV.] afford a good specimen of the force of Lord Byron’s style; as well as of that singular turn of sentiment which we have doubted whether to rank among the defects or the attractions of this performance. The rapturous invocation, in view of the peak of Parnassus, is unquestionably among the most spirited passages of the poem. [Stanzas LX. LXI. LXII.]

The very long and minute description of a bull-fight, is executed with great spirit and dignity; and then there is a short return upon Childe Harold’s gloom and misery, which he explains in a few energetic stanzas addressed ‘To Inez.’ They exemplify that strength of writing and power of versification with which we were so much struck in some of Mr. Crabbe’s smaller pieces, and seem to us to give a very true and touching view of the misery that frequently arises in a soul surfeited with enjoyment. [Four stanzas given.] The canto ends with a view of the atrocities of the French; the determined valour of the Spanish peasantry; and some reflections on the extraordinary condition of that people,

‘Where all are noble, save Nobility;
None hug a conqueror’s chain, save fallen Chivalry!’
‘They fight for freedom who were never free;
A kingless people for a nerveless state,
The vassals combat when their chieftains flee,
True to the veriest slaves of Treachery.’

The second canto conducts us to Greece and Albania; and opens with a solemn address to Athens—which leads again to those

gloomy and uncomfortable thoughts which seem but too familiar to the mind of the author.

' Ancient of days ! august Athena ! where,
Where are thy men of might ? thy grand in soul ?
Gone—glimmering through the dream of things that were.
First in the race that led to glory's goal,
They won, and pass'd away—is this the whole ?
A school-boy's tale, the wonder of an hour !

Son of the morning, rise ! approach you here !
Come—but molest not yon defenceless urn :
Look on this spot—a nation's sepulchre !
Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.
Even gods must yield—religions take their turn :
'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's—and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds ;
Poor child of doubt and death whose hope is built on reeds.

Bound to the earth, he lifts his eye to heaven—
Is't not enough, unhappy thing ! to know
Thou art ? Is this a boon so kindly given,
That being, thou would'st be again, and go,
Thou know'st not, reck'st not to what region, so
On earth no more, but mingled with the skies ?
Still wilt thou dream on future joy and wo ?' &c. p. 62, 63.

[No stricture is made upon these sentiments.] The same train of contemplation is pursued through several stanzas : one of which consists of the moralization on a skull which he gathers from the ruins—and appears to us to be written with great force and originality. [VI.]

There is then a most furious and unmeasured invective on Lord Elgin, for his spoliation of the fallen city ; and when this is exhausted, we are called upon to accompany Harold in his voyage along the shores of Greece. His getting under way is described with great truth and spirit. [XVII.] There is great power, we think, and great bitterness of soul, in the following stanzas. [XXV. XXVI.]

' To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal foot hath ne'er, or rarely been ; [&c.]

Childe Harold cares little for scenes of battle ; and passes Actium and Lepanto with indifference. [XL. XLI.]

' But when he saw the evening star above
Leucadia's far-projecting rock of wo, [&c.]

This is powerful description;—and so is a great deal of what follows, as to the aspect of the Turkish cities, the costume of their warriors, and the characters and occupations of their women. We prefer the commemoration of classic glories. After a solemn and touching exposition of the degraded and hopeless state of modern Greece, Lord Byron proceeds— [LXXIX. &c.]

The poem closes with a few pathetic stanzas to the memory of a beloved object, who appears to have died during the author's wandering among the Grecian cities.

The extracts we have now made, will enable our readers to judge of this poem for themselves; nor have we much to add to the general remarks which we took the liberty of offering at the beginning. Its chief fault is the want of story, or object; and the dark, and yet not tender spirit which breathes through almost every part of it. The general strain of the composition, we have already said, appears to us remarkably good; but it is often very diffuse, and not unfrequently tame and prosaic. We can scarcely conceive any thing more mean and flat, for instance, than this encomium on the landscapes of Illyria.

‘ Yet in fam’d Attica such lovely dales
Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast
A charm they know not; lov’d Parnassus fails,
Though classic ground and consecrated most,
To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast.’ p. 83.

Though even this is more tolerable to our taste than such a line as the following—

‘ Death rides upon the sulphury Siroc;’
and several others that might be collected with no great trouble. The work, in short, bears considerable marks of haste and carelessness; and is rather a proof of the author’s powers, than an example of their successful exertion. It shows the compass of his instrument, and the power of his hand; though we cannot say that we are very much delighted either with the air he has chosen, or the style in which it is executed. The Notes are written in a flippant, lively, *tranchant* and assuming style—neither very deep nor very witty; though rather entertaining, and containing some curious information as to the character and qualifications of the modern Greeks; of whom, as well as of the Portuguese, Lord Byron seems inclined to speak much more favourably in prose than in verse.

The smaller pieces that conclude the volume, are in general spirited and well versified. The three last, which are all a kind of elegies in honour of the same lady whose loss is deplored in the concluding stanzas of the Pilgrimage, are decidedly the best; and appear to us to be written with great beauty and feeling, though not in the most difficult style of composition. The reader may take the following specimens.

‘ Ours too the glance none saw beside ;
The smile none else might understand ;
The whisper’d thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand ;
The kiss so guiltless and refin’d
That love each warmer wish forbore—
Those eyes proclaim’d so pure a mind,
E’en passion blush’d to plead for more—
The tone, that taught me to rejoice,
When prone, unlike thee, to repine ;
The song, celestial from thy voice,
But sweet to me from none but thine.’ p. 193, 194.

‘ The voice that made those sounds more sweet
Is hush’d, and all their charms are fled ;
And now their softest notes repeat
A dirge, an anthem o’er the dead !
Yes, Thyrza ! yes, they breathe of thee,
Beloved dust ! since dust thou art ;
And all that once was harmony
Is worse than discord to my heart !’ p. 195, 196.

‘ One struggle more, and I am free
From pangs that rend my heart in twain ;
One last long sigh to love and thee,
Then back to busy life again.
It suits me well to mingle now
With things that never pleas’d before :
Though every joy is fled below,
What future grief can touch me more ?’

‘ In vain my lyre would lightly breathe !
The smile that sorrow fain would wear
But mocks the wo that lurks beneath,
Like roses o’er a sepulchre.
Though gay companions o’er the bowl
Dispel awhile the sense of ill ;
Though pleasure fires the madd’ning soul :
The heart—the heart is lonely still !

‘ My Thyrza’s pledge in better days,
When love and life alike were new !
How different now thou meet’st my gaze !
How ting’d by time with sorrow’s hue !
The heart that gave itself with thee
Is silent—ah, were mine as still !
Though cold as e’en the dead can be,
It feels, it sickens with the chill.’ p. 197—200.

The Appendix contains some account of Romaic, or modern Greek authors, with a very few specimens of their language and literary attainments. There is a long note upon the same subject, at p. 149, in which Lord Byron does us the honour to controvert some opinions which are expressed in our Thirty-First Number; and to correct some mistakes into which he thinks we have there fallen. To these strictures of the noble author we feel no inclination to trouble our readers with any reply.—But there is one paragraph, in which he not only disclaims any wish to conciliate our favour—but speaks of his ‘private resentments’ against us; and declares, that he has no wish to cancel the remembrance of any syllable he has formerly published—upon which we will confess that we have been sorely tempted to make some observations. Our sense of propriety, however, has determined us to resist this temptation; and we shall merely observe, therefore, that if we viewed with astonishment the immeasurable fury with which the minor poet received the innocent pleasantry and moderate castigation of our remarks on his first publication; we now feel nothing but pity for the strange irritability of temperament which can still cherish a private resentment for such a cause—or wish to perpetuate the memory of personalities so outrageous as to have been injurious only to their author. For our own parts, when we speak in our collective and public capacity, we have neither resentments nor predilections; and take no merit to ourselves for having spoken of Lord Byron’s present publication exactly as we should have done, had we never heard of him before as an author.

[We are induced to suspect that Lord Byron had been apprized that the Reviewers had mistaken his political sentiments,—that he had reason to expect a kinder and more liberal treatment, on his next publication,—and that the short expression of defiance inserted in the note to this work, was intended rather to cover this expectation, than to provoke, to the utmost, their spirit of resentment,—or perhaps, to show his desire, relying upon his merits, to meet, with perfect independence, all the severity of criticism which he was otherwise bound to expect from them. But the cause of party politics was more powerful than the spirit of personal resentment. The just and favourable notice here taken of Childe Harold induced the author, as we are informed, to write immediately to the Editor of the Edinburgh Review, acknowledging his magnanimity, regretting the hostility which had arisen between them, and declaring that, as an atonement for the angry feelings displayed in

mise he has fulfilled ; and it is said, that in England, not a copy of the ‘English Bards and Scotch Reviewers’ is to be found in any Book-Store.

4. The same Work. [Quarterly Review—March, 1812.]

[This Review, which commenced with 1809, took no notice of Byron’s first publication, and conveys but a faint impression of the genius displayed in this.

The Reviewer proceeds at once to an examination in detail of ‘Harold’s Pilgrimage,’—and speaks in a common-place, and rather sneering, style of all his movements,—takes care to insert no praise or opinion of the many passages quoted, and expresses no deference for the powers of his genius. Upon four stanzas, commencing with XXXIV., which are copied, he says,]

These animated lines, and a most terrific description of the genius of battle, which follows them, are naturally dictated by the arrival of the traveller at the camp of the allies, on the morning of the battle of Talavera; and he pays a willing tribute of praise to the splendid and orderly array of the contending armies; but in his reflections on these sanguinary contests, the libertine Childe appears to be a true disciple of Falstaff; and speeds to Seville, where he finds the inhabitants rioting in pleasure, with as much security, as if the defeat of Dupont’s army had crippled the French power, and rendered the Morena impervious to future invasion. At Seville he beholds the illustrious maid of Saragoza, and surveys with much complacency her fairy form—her graceful step—her dazzling black eyes, and glowing complexion; but having no predilection for Amazon beauties, is anxious to exculpate this paragon of Spain, as well as her countrywomen, from any deficiency in the ‘witching arts of love,’ observing that when they mix in the ruder scenes of war,

‘Tis but the tender fierceness of the dove

Pecking the hand that hovers o’er her mate.’

The fascinations of young females are, naturally enough, the favourite theme of young poets; but the minstrel of Childe Harold, aware that some of his readers may possibly be older than himself, has very judiciously suspended his description of the ‘dark glancing daughters’ of Andalusia, for the purpose of saying a few words to Mount Parnassus, at whose foot (as we learn from a note at the bottom of the page) he was actually writing.

[He admits that the stanzas XVII. and the following, in Canto II. are spirited and beautiful. After finishing his sketch, he enters upon his general observations, of which the following are the most useful and judicious.]

We believe that few books are so extensively read and admired as those which contain the narratives of intelligent travellers. Indeed, the greater part of every community are confined, either by necessity or indolence, to a very narrow space on the globe, and are naturally eager to contemplate, in description at least, that endless variety of new and curious objects which a visit to distant countries and climates is known to furnish, and of which only a very limited portion can be accessible to the most enterprising individual. If, then, this species of information be so attractive when conveyed in prose, and sometimes, it must be confessed, in very dull prose, by what accident has it happened that no English poet before Lord Byron has thought fit to employ his talents on a subject so obviously well suited to their display? This inadvertence, if such it be, is the more extraordinary, because the supposed dearth of epic subjects has been, during many years, the only apparent impediment to the almost infinite multiplication of epic poems. If it be supposed that the followers of the muse have not carelessly overlooked, but intentionally rejected the materials offered by a traveller's journal as too anomalous to be employed in a regular and grand composition, we answer that Homer was of a different opinion, and that the *Odyssey* is formed of exactly such materials.

We do not know whether Lord Byron ever had it in contemplation to write an epic poem; but we conceive that the subject, which he selected, is perfectly suited to such a purpose; that the foundation which he has laid is sufficiently solid, and his materials sufficiently ample for the most magnificent superstructure; but we doubt whether his plan be well conceived, and we are by no means disposed to applaud, in every instance, the selection of his ornaments. The plan indeed has not been developed in the two cantos which are now given to the public; but it appears to us that the 'Childe Harold,' whom we suppose, in consequence of the author's positive assurance, to be a mere creature of the imagination, is so far from effecting the object for which he is introduced, and 'giving some connexion to the piece,' that he only tends to embarrass and obscure it. We are told, however, that 'friends, on whose opinions Lord Byron sets a high value,' have suggested to him that he might be 'suspected' of having sketched in his hero a portrait of real life; a suspicion for which, he says, 'in some very trivial particulars there might be grounds; but in the main points *I hope* none whatever.' Now, if he was so anxious to repel a suspicion which had occurred to friends, on whom he set a high value; if he was conscious that the imaginary traveller, whom, from an unwillingness to appear as the hero of his own tale, he had substituted for himself, was so unamiable; we are at a loss to guess at his motives for choosing such a representative. If, for the completion of some design which has not yet appeared, but which is to be effected in

the sequel of the poem, it was necessary to unite, in the person of the pilgrim, the eager curiosity of youth with the fastidiousness of a sated libertine, why revert to the rude and simple ages of chivalry in search of a character which can only exist in an age of vicious refinement? And why is the group of antiques sent on a journey through Portugal and Spain, during the interval between the convention of Cintra and the battle of Talavera? Such inconsistencies appear to us to be perfectly needless; they may be easily removed; and they are by no means innocent if they have led Lord Byron (as we suspect) to adopt that motley mixture of obsolete and modern phraseology by which the ease and elegance of his verses are often injured, and to degrade the character of his work by the insertion of some passages which will probably give offence to a considerable portion of his readers.

But we have not yet exhausted our complaints against the wayward hero of the poem, whose character, we think, is most capriciously and uselessly degraded. [Here follow a great many reflections of the Reviewer, which we think unmerited and petulant, upon these passages.]

‘Three hosts combine to offer sacrifice;
Three tongues prefer strange orisons on high;
Three gaudy standards flout the pale blue skies;
The shouts are France, Spain, Albion, Victory!
The foe, the victim, and the fond ally
That fights for all, but ever fights in vain,
Are met—as if at home they could not die—
To feed the crow on Talavera’s plain,
And fertilize the field that each pretends to gain.

There shall they rot—Ambition’s honour’d fools!
Yes, honour decks the turf that wraps their clay!
Vain Sophistry! in these behold the tools,
The broken tools, that tyrants cast away.’

‘Enough of Battle’s minions! let them play
Their game of lives, and barter breath for fame:
Fame that will scarce re-animate their clay,
Though thousands fall to deck some single name.
In sooth ’twere sad to thwart their noble aim
Who strike, blest hirelings! for their country’s good,
And die, that living might have proved her shame.’

‘ he would not delight
(Born beneath some remote inglorious star)
In themes of bloody fray, or gallant fight,
But loath’d the bravo’s trade, and laughed at martial wight.’

Now surely it was not worth while to conjure a ‘Childe Harold’ out of some old tapestry, and to bring him into the field of Talavera, for the purpose of indulging in such meditations as these. It is undoubtedly true that the cannon and the musketry must often anticipate the stroke of time; and carry off, in the vigour of life, many who might have been reserved at home to a long protracted decay. It is moreover true that the buried will rot; that the unburied may become food for crows, and consequently, that the man who has bartered life for fame has no chance, when once killed, of coming to life again. But these truths, we apprehend, are so generally admitted that it is needless to inculcate them. It is certainly untrue that fame is of little value. It is something to be honoured by those whom we love. It is something to the soldier when he returns to the arms of a mother, a wife, or a sister, to see in their eyes the tears of exultation mixing with those of affection, and of pious gratitude to heaven for his safety. These joys of a triumph, it may be said, are mere illusions; but for the sake of such illusions is life chiefly worth having. When we read the preceding sarcasms on the ‘bravo’s trade,’ we are induced to ask, not without some anxiety and alarm, whether such are indeed the opinions which a British peer entertains of a British army.

Having already given our reasons for thinking that the perversity of character attributed to the hero of the piece is far too highly coloured, it is needless to comment on that settled despair,

‘*That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before.*’—(p. 52.)

This is the consummation of human misery; and if it had been the author’s principal object, in delineating this fictitious personage, to hold him up to his young readers as a dreadful example of early profligacy, such a finishing to the picture might be vindicated as consistent and useful. In that case, however, it would have been doubly essential to devest the ‘Childe’ of his chivalrous title and attributes;[^a] and the attention of the poet and of the reader being engrossed by one dismal object, it would have become necessary to sacrifice a large portion of that elegance and animation by which the present work is confessedly distinguished.

In the note inserted at p. 143, Lord Byron has certainly replied, with great liberality and decorum, to a set of critics, who, in their censures of his earlier works, had not set him the example of extreme urbanity; but the instance of unprovoked pugnacity to which we allude is exhibited in pp. 146 and 147, where he denies to Mr. Thornton any ‘claims to public confidence from a fourteen years’ residence at Pera;’ assuring us that ‘this can give him no more in-

[a This reminds us of Rymer’s remarks on Shakspeare, in the last number of our *Repository*.]

sight into the real state of Greece and her inhabitants than as many years spent at Wapping into that of the western Highlanders.' But, in the first place, if Lord Byron be right, Mr. Thornton cannot be wholly wrong; for, on comparing their respective opinions, it will be found that, in all essential points, they very nearly coincide. Secondly, as Constantinople and its immediate vicinity may furnish about one hundred thousand specimens of Greeks of different ranks and conditions, whilst Wapping cannot be supposed to offer very numerous samples of western Highlanders, we cannot consider the noble lord's illustration as very apposite.

It is now time to take leave—we hope not a long leave—of Childe Harold's migrations; but we are unwilling to conclude our article without repeating our thanks to the author for the amusement which he has afforded us. The applause which he has received has been very general, and, in our opinion, well deserved. We think that the poem exhibits some marks of carelessness, many of caprice, but many also of sterling genius....But it was our duty attentively to search for, and honestly to point out the faults arising from caprice, or from a disregard of general opinion; because it is a too common, though a very mischievous prejudice, to suppose that genius and eccentricity are usual and natural companions; and that to discourage extravagance is to check the growth of excellence. Lord Byron has shown that his confidence in his own powers is not to be subdued by illiberal and unmerited censure; and we are sure that it will not be diminished by our animadversions: we are not sure that we should have better consulted his future fame, or our own character for candour, if we had expressed our sense of his talents in terms of more unqualified panegyric.

LORD BYRON SALVED FROM HIS FRIENDS.: "THIS IS NOT TRUE--THE ...

The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (1822-1842); Apr 1, 1825; 6, 34;

American Periodicals

pg. 325

LORD BYRON SAVED FROM HIS FRIENDS.

[Being an article selected for the Museum from the Westminster Review.]

Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron, from the year 1808, to the end of 1814; exhibiting his early Character and Opinions; detailing the progress of his Literary Career, and including various unpublished passages of his Works. Taken from authentic documents in the possession of the Author; by the late R. C. Dallas, Esq. to which is prefixed *An Account of the Circumstances leading to the Suppression of Lord Byron's Correspondence with the Author, and his Letters to his*

Mother, lately announced for publication. London. Printed for Charles Knight, Pall Mall East.

Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron, noted during a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the years 1821 and 1822. By Thomas Medwin, Esq. of the 24th Light Dragoons. Author of "Ahasuerus the Wanderer." London. Colburn. 1824.

As far as the title-page is concerned, the work of Mr. R. C. Dallas is a regular catch-penny publication. It is any thing but what it pretends to be; it does *not* "exhibit the early character and opinions" of Lord Byron; it does *not* "detail the progress of his literary career;" it does "include various unpublished passages of his works," but they are passages which Lord Byron had condemned as not worth publishing; and as to "the account of the circumstances leading to the suppression of Lord Byron's correspondence," it is not an account of those circumstances, but is a very impudent and confused mis-statement of a transaction in which the public are in no ways interested, and to which we should pay no attention were it not a public duty to expose conduct such as that of the author of the misrepresentation.

We do not intend to permit the notice of this trumpery volume, to draw us into a general comment on the character of the extraordinary person whom it was meant to defame. - We would not willingly connect such a discussion with a work so utterly worthless as the one before us; and taking care to see "execution done" on Mr. R. C. Dallas, and his son Alexander, we shall not introduce any more facts respecting Lord Byron than may be just sufficient to portray, in their proper colours, the author and editor of these Recollections. Since Orrery wrote his defamatory life of Swift, and since Mr. Wyndham published Doddington's Diary, in order to expose the author of that strange record of venality, we are not aware that the friends or family of any writer have deliberately set down to diminish his fame and tarnish his character. Such, however, has been the case in the work before us. We do not mean to say that such was the first object in view by the author or authors of this volume. No; their first object was the laudable motive of putting money into their purses; for it appears upon their own showing, that Mr. R. C. Dallas, having made as much money as he could out of Lord Byron in his lifetime, resolved to pick up a decent livelihood (either in his own person or that of his son) out of his friend's remains when dead. Mr. R. C. Dallas, had, it seems, some how or other, got into his possession some letters addressed by Lord Byron to his mother; he had, also, some letters addressed by Lord Byron to himself. Of these letters (connected by notes and observations) he formed a sort of memoir of the life of Lord Byron, which he kept by him for some time, intending to sell it in his own lifetime, if he should survive Lord Byron, or leave it as a legacy to his family should he die before his lordship. But it appears that Mr. R. C. Dallas could not wait

for his money so long as was requisite, and that in the year 1819 he became a little impatient to touch something in his lifetime: accordingly, in an evil hour, he writes a long long letter to Lord Byron, containing a debtor and creditor account between R. C. Dallas and his lordship; by which, when duly balanced, it appeared that said Lord Byron was still considerably in arrears of friendship and obligation to said R. C. Dallas, and ought to acquit himself by a remittance of *materials* (such is Mr. R. C. Dallas's own word, in his own letter, as will be seen by and by) to his creditor Mr. R. C. Dallas. Lord Byron, however, seems to have entertained very different notions as to the nature of the account between the parties; he sent no *materials*; and Mr. R. C. Dallas could have no profitable dealings with the booksellers just at that moment; but he consoled himself with the notion, that his manuscript would be worth something at some time or other, and that either alive or dead, Lord Byron would still be forced to furnish some hundreds of pounds to him or his heirs, and thus balance the long outstanding account between them. The death of Lord Byron, of course, seemed at once to promise this settlement: no sooner had he heard it, than he set about copying the manuscripts; he wrote to Messrs. Galignani at Paris, to know whether they would "*enter into the speculation*" of publishing some very interesting manuscripts of Lord Byron; he set off for London; he sold the volume to a London bookseller, and "*he returned without loss of time to France.*" His worthy son has told us all this himself, at pages 94 and 95 of his volume, and has actually printed the letter his father wrote to Messrs. Galignani, to show, we suppose, how laudably alert Mr. R. C. Dallas evinced himself to be on this interesting opportunity of securing his lawful property. The booksellers, also, performed their part; they announced the "*Private Correspondence*" of Lord Byron for sale; and, as it also appears by this volume, were so active as to be prepared to bring their goods to market before Lord Byron's funeral. Nay, more, that they might do complete justice to Mr. R. C. Dallas's property, they contrived to announce it for publication on the very day that the remains of Lord Byron were carried through the streets of London, on their way to the family vault in Nottinghamshire.

Certainly, no scheme, short of arresting the body itself, could seem better imagined for discharging Lord Byron's debts to Mr. R. C. Dallas. But it unfortunately happened, that this *speculation*, as the author very properly calls it, was not so agreeable to Mrs. Leigh, Lord Byron's sister, nor to Lord Byron's executors, as it had been to Messrs. Galignani of Paris, and Knight of London. They thought differently of the publication of private letters; and Mrs. Leigh desired Mr. Hobhouse, one of the executors, to write to Mr. R. C. Dallas to say, that she should think the publication in question "*quite unpardonable,*" at least for the present, and unless after a previous inspection by his lordship's family. Unfortunately for Mr. Dallas, it appears, according to this volume,

that Mr. Hobhouse did not in this letter, state that he was Lord Byron's executor; but merely appealed to Mr. R. C. Dallas's "honour and feeling," wishing probably to try that topic first; and thinking it more respectful to do so, than to threaten the author with legal interference at once. Mr. Dallas was resolved upon getting his money, and wrote a very angry letter, not to Mr. Hobhouse but to Mrs. Leigh (which his prudent son has also printed) containing menaces not unskillfully calculated to intimidate that lady, especially considering that she must have been at that moment peculiarly disposed to receive any unpleasant impressions—her brother's corpse lying yet unburied. For an author and seller of Remains the time was not ill chosen—by a gentleman and a man, another moment, to say nothing of another style, might perhaps have been selected. But no time was to be lost; the book must be out on the 12th of July, and out it would have been had not the executors procured an injunction against it on the 7th of the same month, and thus very seriously damaged, if not ruined, Mr. R. C. Dallas's "*speculation*." All this we collect from the volume itself, which, it should be now told, is made up in such a way as to avoid the Chancery veto, and contains probably only Mr. R. C. Dallas's portion of that work with which he originally intended to favour the public; for of Lord Byron's composition there is little or nothing, except a speech in parliament printed long ago, and except some scraps of rejected poetry, which Mr. R. C. Dallas thinks himself justified in publishing now, though he takes great credit for having persuaded Lord Byron to suppress them before. Ninety-seven pages of the volume are taken up with a statement of the proceedings in Chancery, which were so fatal to the "*speculation*." In this statement, which is written by Mr. Alexander Dallas, the son of Mr. R. C. Dallas, who died before the volume could be published, it may easily be supposed that all imaginable hard things are said of those who spoiled the *speculation*. The executors, and Lord Byron's sister, are spoken of in terms which, if noticed, would certainly very much increase those "*expenses*" of which the Rev. Alexander Dallas so piteously complains; for we doubt if any jury would hesitate to return a verdict of libel and slander against many passages which we could point out in the preliminary statement. It is probable that the animosity against Lord Byron's sister and executors, has contributed, in some degree, though not altogether, to the general complexion of the Recollections themselves, which, as we have before stated, must be ranked amongst the very few specimens to be found of downright defamatory memoirs. The greater part of the Recollections, indeed, consists of very tiresome homilies and fragments from the pen of the author of Aubrey, not from that of the author of Childe Harold; but wherever mention is made of Lord Byron, it is to deplore the ruin of his original disposition, the perversion of his genius, and the wickedness of his associates. Of course, therefore, the credit to be attached to these Recollections must depend, not

upon the literary skill with which they may be composed (which we could settle at once by the quotation of any passage at random,) but upon the character of the author or authors. We think we can decide this question, having had recourse to the best sources of information, and having been favoured with the sight of certain documents which, without any comments, will speak for themselves.

As to the qualification of this connexion of the Byron family, and friend of Lord Byron, for writing a biography of the poet, some opinion may be formed by the fact, that Mr. R. C. Dallas opens his Recollections by a passage which contains two errors. He says, "The former, whose name was John, died at Valenciennes not long after the birth of his son, which took place at Dover." Lord Byron's father did not die till three years and a half after the birth of his son, which did not take place at Dover, but in Holles-street, at London. The Rev. Alexander Dallas is equally well informed when he says, in page 92, speaking of the Byrons, that they are "a very ancient and honourable family, which was afterwards ennobled by James 1st." The peerage was given to the family, not by James 1st, but Charles 1st.

These misstatements, however, are immaterial, in comparison with that made by the Rev. Alexander Dallas, in page 91 of his attack on the executors, in which we find these words:—

"For many years of his life Lord Byron never saw Mrs. Leigh, and would have no communication with her; he was averse to the society of the sex, and thought lightly of family ties. This separation continued from his boyhood up to the year 1812: during the latter part of which period, Mr. Dallas continually, but fruitlessly, endeavoured to induce Lord Byron to take notice of Mrs. Leigh."

We have nothing to do with the amiable motive of this assertion. To injure the character of Lord Byron, to distress Mrs. Leigh, and to show the obligations of his lordship to Mr. Dallas; all these objects are quite worthy of the "speculation;" but we fearlessly answer—the statement is untrue.

Lord Byron was taken into Scotland by his mother and father, and Mrs. Leigh was left in England with her grandmother, to whom her father had consigned her on condition that she should provide for her. They were thus separated from 1789 until Lord Byron came to England; when they met as often as possible, although it was not easy to bring them together, as Mrs. Byron, the mother of Lord Byron, had quarrelled with lady Holderness. For the intercourse which did take place, the brother and sister were indebted to the kind offices of Lord Carlisle.

In page 17 of the Recollections, we find Mr. Dallas (the father) saying—

"He declaimed against the ties of consanguinity, and abjured even the society of his sister, from which he entirely withdrew himself until after the publication of Childe Harold, when at length he yielded to my persuasions, and made advances towards a friendly intercourse with her."

That Lord Byron might have dropped an unguarded opinion as

to relationship in general is possible, though such an error is nothing in comparison with the atrocity of coolly recording that opinion as if it had been an habitual sentiment, which we say it was not. We say that it is *untrue* that Lord Byron declaimed against the ties of consanguinity. It is *untrue* that he entirely withdrew from the company of his sister during the period alluded to. It is *untrue* that he "made advances" to a friendly intercourse with her only after the publication of Childe Harold, and only at the persuasion of Mr. R. C. Dallas. Mrs. Leigh corresponded with Lord Byron at the very time mentioned, and saw him in Lord Carlisle's house in the spring of 1809; after which he went abroad, and did not return until July, 1811.

We speak from the same authority, when we say that what is said of Lord Carlisle, though there was, as all the world knows, a difference between his lordship and Lord Byron, is also at variance with the facts.

Having thus noticed and shown the value of the assertion by which the two Dallases have attempted to wound the feelings of Lord Byron's sister, we shall now do the same by an assault which the reverend gentleman, the son, has made upon Mr. Hobhouse—Lord Byron's friend. Alexander Dallas says, page 34, 35.

"Mr. Hobhouse was travelling with Lord Byron during the time when many of these letters were written, and probably he supposes that his lordship may have often mentioned him to his mother. This seems an equally natural supposition with the other; and if it should have entered into Mr. Hobhouse's head, he would, by analogy, be equally ready to swear, not that he supposed he was often mentioned, but that he really was so. And yet, after reading Lord Byron's letters to his mother, it would never be gathered from them that he had any companion at all in his travels; *except, indeed, that Mr. Hobhouse's name is mentioned in an enumeration of his suite; and upon parting with him, Lord Byron expresses his satisfaction at being alone.*"

Now for the fact—When captain (the present lord) Byron had an interview with Mr. Hobhouse on the subject of these memoirs, of which interview Mr. Alexander Dallas gives a garbled account, his lordship stated to Mr. Hobhouse that he had seen the volume, and that there was only one passage which could possibly be disagreeable to Mr. H., and that even that passage taken in connexion with what followed, could not leave any unpleasant impression. His lordship then repeated the passage to Mr. Hobhouse, and we can state that the reverend editor has mentioned the portion which might be likely to hurt Mr. Hobhouse's feelings, but has honestly omitted to state the explanatory addition with which Lord Byron concluded his remark to his mother, "that he was not sorry to be alone."

But we have it in our power to show, in a more conclusive way, the degree of faith to be attached to Mr. A. Dallas's statement. When the lord chancellor had confirmed that part of the vice-chancellor's injunction which referred to Lord Byron's letters to Mr. Dallas, Mr. Alexander Dallas resolved to make another trial to obtain the consent of the executors, to the publication of the volume,

and he accordingly wrote a letter to Mr. Hobhouse, a copy of which is lying before us; and which, for a reason that will be obvious on perusal, was the only one of the letters that passed between the parties on this occasion that Mr. Dallas has not thought proper to publish. We give it entire, and we print in capital letters that part of it which we wish the reader to contrast with the before-quoted statement made by Mr. A. Dallas relative to Lord Byron's notice of Mr. Hobhouse in his letters.

Wooburn, near Beaconsfield, Bucks, 24 Aug. 1824.

“SIR;—I have just read the opinion which the lord chancellor has expressed relating to the publication of the letters of Lord Byron. He holds that those to my father cannot be published without the consent of the executors, while, respecting those to his mother, he has reserved his opinion until Saturday; at the same time, what he has already said upon that point makes it more than probable that the injunction will be dissolved as far as relates to them; and he has thrown out a hint which suggests, that the substance and matter of the letters to my father may be published as information without inserting the letters themselves. As there is time between this and the lord chancellor's final judgment on Saturday, I think it right to renew the negotiation which had commenced through the medium of my friend Lord Byron upon the subject, and which was only interrupted in consequence of *Mr. Hanson's* wishing for delay. By Lord Byron you have been informed of the nature of the work as it had been prepared for present publication: he read the book, and from his personal knowledge of the parties mentioned in it, was well able to judge of the effect every part would have upon them; he stated to you, if I mistake not, that in his opinion the work contained nothing that could harm any one, and that it was calculated to raise Lord Byron in the estimation of the world; his opinion is amply corroborated by the testimony given in the affidavits in the cause. If the executors withdraw their opposition to the publication, I am ready to pledge myself that the work shall be printed exactly as he read it; and that an advertisement or notice shall be prefixed to the title-page, stating that it was published by the consent of the executors.

I REMEMBER THAT LORD BYRON REMARKED UPON TWO PASSAGES IN LETTERS FROM THE LATE LORD WHICH HE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT DISLIKE. I THINK THAT WHEN TAKEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE MANY TIMES WHICH HE MENTIONS YOU THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH GREAT AFFECTION, THAT THEY WOULD HARDLY OCCUPY YOUR MIND A MOMENT; but as they were the only passages upon which Lord Byron remarked at all in the work as it stands, I will readily agree to expunge them altogether, that it may remain as he thought it could not be disapproved of. I have no objection to submit the work to the inspection of a third person. Dr. Lushington has been named by yourself, and though I have not the least personal knowledge of

that gentleman, I should be very ready to omit any passage of the letters to which he, on your part, might object.

"Should this arrangement not be made, I have no doubt that my father will act upon the chancellor's suggestion, and speedily publish a memoir of Lord Byron, taken from the documents he has in his hands, and introducing, at the same time, such parts of the former manuscript, to which allusion has been made in the course of the proceedings, as he may think proper. At the same time, I confess that it would give me so much pain to see such a work published, that it would be proportionably gratifying if it could be superseded by the proposed arrangement. I shall be under the necessity of immediately writing to my father (who is in Paris, not yet able to travel) upon the subject of the chancellor's opinion, and it would very much forward the arrangement I propose, if, at the same time, I were enabled to mention the result of this letter. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALEXANDER R. C. DALLAS.

J. C. Hobhouse, Esq. M. P.
6, Albany, Piccadilly.

Such was Mr. Alexander Dallas's letter to Mr. Hobhouse; and that he should, after writing such a letter, make a statement which he knew the production of that letter could positively contradict, is an instance of confidence in the forbearance of others such as we never have happened before to witness. We beg the reader to compare the words in italics from Mr. Dallas's statement with the words in capitals from Mr. Dallas's letter—and then to ask himself whether he thinks Lord Byron's reputation, or that of his relations and friends, has much to suffer or fear from such a censor as the Reverend Alexander Dallas. In the Statement, he tells the world that Mr. Hobhouse is mentioned in Lord Byron's letters in the enumeration of his suite; and, in a remark, that Lord Byron was satisfied at being alone. In the letter, he tells Mr. Hobhouse, that "he (Mr. Hobhouse) is mentioned throughout the whole of the correspondence with great affection."*

* Of course, such persons as Mr. Dallas and his son Alexander could have no notion, but that Mr. Hobhouse's interference to prevent the publication of the correspondence must have been dictated by some interested motive; and hence, the offer to omit any passage in the letter that might be disagreeable to that gentleman. And here we will remark, that it might have been very possible that two young men, neither of them three and twenty, travelling together, might occasionally have had such differences as to give rise to uncomfortable feelings, which one of them might communicate when *writing to his own mother*; but that it is impossible to believe, that after many years of subsequent intercourse, the writer would make a present of such letters for publication, as contained any thing to wound the feelings of him with whom he was living on terms of the most unreserved intimacy. Mr. R. C. Dallas, in his letter to Mrs. Leigh, which his son has published, asserted that Mr. Hobhouse had endeavoured to stop the forthcoming volume because he was alarmed and agitated (so he calls it) for himself—and he hints that he had reason for so feeling—as if Lord Byron's letters might contain disagreeable mention of him; yet it afterwards turned out, upon the confession of Dallas, the son, that Mr. Hobhouse is "mentioned throughout the whole of the correspond-

To such an appeal of mingled cajolery and menacing, no answer was, of course, given—but the precious document was preserved amongst the executor's papers, and has served to display the true character of one of the parties to the composition of the volume now under our notice. Before we part with the reverend gentleman, we would remark upon the trait of sincerity with which he concludes his letter—he expresses the pain which the publication of his father's original memoirs would give him; and yet, when he has it in his absolute power, after his father's death, to do what he will, he not only publishes that, or a most injurious portion of that, which he states would give so much pain—but he adds statements of his own, ten thousand times more offensive, and calculated (if they were not all unfounded) not only to injure the memory of the dead, but to wound the feelings of the living.

We now come to the reverend gentleman's father, and as the death of Lord Byron did not prevent that person from writing what we know to be unfounded of his lordship, we shall not refrain, because he also is dead, from saying what we know to be founded of Mr. R. C. Dallas. In performing this task we are, most luckily, furnished with a list of Mr. Dallas's pretensions, by Mr. Dallas himself, in the shape of a letter written by that person to Lord Byron in 1819, of which the Reverend Alexander Dallas has thought fit to publish a considerable portion. To this letter, or list of Mr. R. C. Dallas's brilliant virtues, and benefits conferred upon Lord Byron, we shall oppose an answer from a person, whom neither Mr. R. C. Dallas nor his reverend son had ever dreamt could appear against them again in this world—that person is Lord Byron himself. For it so happens, that although his lordship did not re-

ence with great affection." Supposing the contrary had been the case, whose character would have suffered? Mr. Hobhouse might have been grieved, but it would not have been for himself; the indiscretion of giving (if he did give) such letters to a third person would have rested with Lord Byron; but the infamy of publishing them would have belonged only to the seller of the manuscripts. We will show, in this place, another proof of the sort of moral principle which has presided over the publication in question. It answered the purpose of the editor to deal in the strongest insinuations against Mr. Hobhouse; but, unfortunately, his father had, in the course of his correspondence with Lord Byron, mentioned that gentleman in very different terms—what does the honest editor do? he gives only the initial of the name, so that the eulogy, such as it is, may serve for any Mr. H **. Mr. R. C. Dallas's words are, "I gave Murray your note on M **, to be placed in the page with Wingfield. He must have been a very extraordinary young man, and I am sincerely sorry for H **, for whom I have felt an increased regard ever since I heard of his intimacy with my son at Cadiz, and that they were mutually pleased" [p. 165.] The H ** stands for Hobhouse, and the M ** whom R. C. Dallas characterizes here, "as an extraordinary young man," becomes, in the hands of his honest son, "an unhappy Atheist" [p. 325,] whose name he mentions, in another place, at full length, and characterizes him in such a way as must give the greatest pain to the surviving relations and friends of the deceased. We know of nothing more inexcusable than this conduct. In the blind rage to be avenged of Lord Byron, because he would give no more money or manuscripts to Mr. R. C. Dallas, and of his lordship's executor, because he would not permit his private letters to be published; the father and son not only consign the "body, soul, and muse" of their benefactor to perdition, but extend their malediction to those whom he has recorded as being the objects of his affection and regard.

ply to the said letter by writing to the author, yet he did transmit that epistle, with sundry notes of his own upon it, to one of his correspondents in England. The letter itself, with Lord Byron's notes, is now lying before us, and we shall proceed at once to cite the passages which Lord Byron has commented upon, all of which, with one exception, to be noticed hereafter, have before been given to the public.

Mr. Dallas's letter says;

"I take it for granted, that when you excluded me from your friendship, you also banished me from your thoughts, and forgot the occurrences of our intimacy. I will, therefore, bring one circumstance to your recollection, as it is introductory to the subject of this letter. One day when I called upon you at your apartments in Albany, you took up a book in which you had been writing, and having read a few short passages, you said that you intended to fill it with the characters of those then around you, and with present anecdotes, to be published in the succeeding century, and not before; and you enjoyed, by anticipation, the effect that would be produced on the fifth and sixth generations of those to whom you should give niches in your posthumous volume. I have often thought of this fancy of yours, and imagined the wits, the belles, and the beaux, the dupes of one sex, and the artful and frail ones of the other, figuring, at the beginning of the 20th century, in the actual costume of the 19th. I remember well that, after one or two sketches, you concluded with, 'This morning Mr. Dallas was here,' &c.; you went no further—but the smile with which you shut the book gave me to understand, that the colours you had used for my portrait were not of a dismal hue, &c."

To which Lord Byron appends this note.

"I RECOLLECT NOTHING OF ALL THIS—but suppose that he alludes to a journal which I kept for six months, in 1813 and 14, and afterwards gave to Moore, who, I believe, still has it."

Thus, it appears, that Lord Byron recollects NOTHING OF ALL THIS—which, however, under the hands of Mr. Alexander Dallas, has grown into a more considerable event than when described by his father. Mr. R. C. Dallas only says, "I will, therefore, bring ONE circumstance to your recollection, as it is introductory to the subject of this letter—ONE DAY when I called upon you at your apartments in Albany." But Mr. Alexander Dallas says, in page iv. of his preliminary statement, "Mr. Dallas had MANY TIMES heard him read portions of a book in which his lordship inserted his opinion of the persons with whom he lived."

So that we find the "ONE circumstance" and the "ONE day" swollen into "many times." Doubtless one is as true as the other; for we have the authority of the other party for saying that Lord Byron did not plead guilty to the circumstance, such as it was represented by his volunteer correspondent.

We will now proceed to another passage of this very ingenious letter.—

"It is true that I benefited not inconsiderably by some of your works; but it was not in the power of money to satisfy or repay me. I felt the pecuniary benefit as I ought, and I was not slow in acknowledging it as I ought. The six or seven hundred pounds paid by the purchaser of Childe Harold for the copyright was, in my mind, nothing in comparison with the honour that was due to me for discerning the genius that lay buried in the Pilgrimage, and in exciting you to the publication of it, in spite of the damp which had been thrown upon it in the course of its composition, and in spite of your own reluctance and almost determination to suppress it."

Across this passage Lord Byron has written as follows.

MEMORANDUM.

TWO HUNDRED POUNDS BEFORE I WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD.

COPYRIGHT OF CHILDE HAROLD, £600.

COPYRIGHT OF CORSAIR, £500.

AND £50 FOR HIS NEPHEW ON ENTERING THE ARMY; IN ALL £1350, AND NOT 6 OR 700 AS THE WORTHY ACCOUNTANT RECKONS.

Thus it appears that the pecuniary assistance afforded to Mr. R. C. Dallas, and for which his posthumous volume shows him to have been so grateful, was not confined to the purchase money for his lordship's works; but that the honourable biographer borrowed £200 of his young acquaintance before he was "*twenty years of age!*!" It is, indeed, much to be lamented by the Dallas family, that his lordship should have ever fallen into these evil courses which, it seems, made him forget the lessons of prudence and propriety, and the examples of decent sober life, which Mr. R. C. Dallas took care to bring before his pupil before he was *twenty years of age*.

But to go on:—Mr. R. C. Dallas's letter continues, just after the former passage, in this strain. He says that these "six or seven hundred pounds" were "nothing in comparison with the kindness that was due to me for the part I took in keeping back your Hints from Horace, and the new edition of the Satire."

Lord Byron here makes the following note:—

"THIS IS NOT TRUE—THE PUBLICATION OF CHILDE HAROLD WAS URGED, BUT NOT THE SUPPRESSION OF THE SATIRE. WHAT TOOK PLACE WAS IN 1812, TO GRATIFY ROGERS, WHO ASKED ME ON ACCOUNT OF LORD HOLLAND.

So much for Mr. R. C. Dallas's mode of acquitting his pecuniary obligation towards Lord Byron. He, first of all, calls the debt 6 or £700; it turns out to be £1350. He then says that this sum is nothing in comparison with the kindness due to him for the part he took in keeping back the Hints from Horace. This assertion Lord Byron states is NOT TRUE. We may add, on our parts, that had it been true, the kindness would have been cancelled by the fact that Mr. R. C. Dallas has actually now published part of that which

he says he had prevailed on Lord Byron to suppress. The honesty and decency of this latter part of the transaction are quite in union with the truth and delicacy, and, indeed, the wisdom of the "new way to pay old debts" adopted by Mr. R. C. Dallas. We must also be permitted to add, that Lord Byron has exactly, and in one word, told the truth, as to the share which Mr. R. C. Dallas had in the publication of Childe Harold; and that Mr. R. C. Dallas has not told the truth. For he would first make Lord Byron believe, and now he would make the world believe, that he was the sole encourager and cause of Childe Harold being given to the world. He did "*urge*" it when Lord Byron had some doubts about it, but that he was the only person to urge it, is not true. We speak from personal knowledge of the facts.

Mr. R. C. Dallas, however, still urges upon Lord Byron his merits, quite "*impayables*" it appears, in saving him from himself. He says,

"My head is full of you, and whether you allow me the merit or not, my heart tells me that I was chiefly instrumental, by my conduct in 1812, in saving you from perpetuating the enmity of the world, or rather, in forcing you against your will into its admiration and love; and that I afterwards considerably retarded your rapid retrograde motion from the enviable station which genius merits."

Across these passages, opposite the words "saving you from perpetuating the enmity," Lord Byron has put "THE DEVIL YOU DID? and over the words "*rapid retrograde motion*" Lord Byron has written "WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN? AND HOW?"

If any comment can be considered necessary in addition to these few words of Lord Byron, we would just remark as a slight inconsistency in the character and pretensions of Mr. R. C. Dallas, that whereas he in this letter gives himself so much praise, and would wipe off an obligation of £1350 because he persuaded Lord Byron against his will to publish Childe Harold—yet it seems that, according to his worthy son, "one of the last charges which he gave me upon his death-bed, but a few days before he died, and with the full anticipation of his end, was, not to let this work go forth to the world without stating his sincere feeling of sorrow that ever he had been instrumental in bringing forward Childe Harold's Pilgrimage to the public; since the publication of it had produced such disastrous effects to one, whom he had loved so affectionately." See page 341 of the Recollections.

According to Mr. R. C. Dallas's letter, these disastrous effects had been produced when he wrote that letter in 1819, and yet at that time Mr. Dallas made a merit with his lordship for having been the man-midwife of this very poem.

Again: the other conspicuous merit of Mr. R. C. Dallas, according to himself, was his saving Lord Byron from "perpetuating the enmity of the world," by causing him to suppress his Hints from Horace, and the new edition of his Satire. Yet it appears

that, according to the same Mr. R. C. Dallas, those very persons from whose perpetual enmity he saved Lord Byron, were the individuals whose wicked society and influence he suffered to efface all those habits of faith, both spiritual and pecuniary, which had been instilled into the mind of his lordship by Mr. R. C. Dallas before the *age of twenty*.

We have now to mention that, Mr. R. C. Dallas after the words which conclude his letter, as given by his son, namely, these words: "but my present anxiety is, to see you restored to your station in this world, after trials that should induce you to look seriously into futurity,"—after these words, we find in the original letter the following—

"I have now done for the present; what say you, will you embrace my proposal? will you add any fresh materials which may justify or conciliate? and will you join zealously in the execution of my meditated design. I will now only add, that I am confident it wants but an effort of wisdom on your part, and a cordial co-operation, to effect all that one friend could wish for another. Adieu: —even though you should despise this attempt, I will not think so ill of you as to imagine that my letter, failing in its object, will have any other effect upon you, than that of making you sorry for your conduct towards me; and while I live you shall have the prayers of

R. C. DALLAS.

"My address is—Monsieur Dallas, Ste. Adresse près de Havre, Seine Inferieure, France.

"P. S. On a reperusal of this letter, I found my mind inclining to revolt at one or two passages. The expressing a consciousness of merit of any kind, almost, if not altogether, destroys its value. No man is more sensible of this than I am; it is, besides, an insufferable weakness, one that I despise too much to be guilty of myself; but there are circumstances, which not only palliate, but call upon men to show that, however they may pass it over, they are not ignorant of their due. I *will* let my letter go, for I am certain that I have not written for the purpose of hurting your feelings; that my only aim is what I have expressed. Short of that, I look for nothing further between us. Were that to be accomplished, your regard would accompany me for the remainder of my life and outlive me. If you are silent, are resolved in your indifference to the best objects of life, I may again be sorry, but I shall only be where I was.

R. C. D."

It is quite clear from this conclusion to R. C. D's letter, in what way he intended Lord Byron should look "*seriously into futurity*;" he at once asks Lord Byron, having before mentioned his intended public account of his lordship's pursuits, together with a letter to Lady Byron, "*will you add any fresh materials which may justify or conciliate?*" It was quite indifferent what sort of share Lord Byron took in the intended publication—he might

either conciliate his wife, or justify his conduct towards her; provided only he appeared in print in company with R. C. Dallas. This will be seen by every body, and it was seen by Lord Byron, who, to the end of the said letter, appended what follows in verse and prose.

HERE LIES R. C. DALLAS,
WHO WANTED MONEY AND HAD SOME MALICE,
IF INSTEAD OF A COTTAGE HE HAD LIVED IN A PALACE,
WE SHOULD HAVE HAD NONE OF THESE SALLIES.

THE UPSHOT OF THIS LETTER APPEARS TO BE, TO OBTAIN MY SANCTION TO THE PUBLICATION OF A VOLUME ABOUT MR. DALLAS AND MYSELF, WHICH I SHALL NOT ALLOW. THE LETTER HAS REMAINED AND WILL REMAIN UNANSWERED. I NEVER INJURED MR. R. C. DALLAS, BUT DID HIM ALL THE GOOD I COULD, AND I AM QUITE UNCONSCIOUS AND IGNORANT OF WHAT HE MEANS BY REPROACHING ME WITH UNGENEROUS TREATMENT; THE FACTS WILL SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES TO THOSE WHO KNOW THEM—THE PROOF IS EASY.

Such were Lord Byron's observations upon Mr. R. C. Dallas's letter and his own conduct; and yet mark the proceedings of this aged novel-writer! He knew, as well as Lord Byron, that he had received nothing but favours from his lordship; yet he deliberately sits down to write this absurd and impertinent letter; he takes a copy of it; intending, as it has turned out, if Lord Byron's contempt should induce him not to answer it, to quote his letter, and state that silence as something like an acquiescence in its contents; and, he accordingly not only does embody a part of the said letter in his intended memoirs, but actually introduces it into an affidavit in Chancery, as a proof that Lord Byron was cognizant, and, by implication, did not disapprove, of Mr. Dallas's biographical enterprise. Yet here we have Lord Byron's own decision on this subject, which exactly tallies with that of his lordship's executors; for he says, as before quoted—" *The upshot of this letter appears to be, to obtain my sanction to the publication of a volume about Mr. Dallas and myself, which I shall not allow.*" Will any body, after reading this, believe, that Lord Byron gave his letters to his mother to Mr. Dallas to be published? When he here says, that he will not give his sanction to the publication of that identical posthumous volume, which Mr. Dallas told him was then "*made up,*" and which, or a great part of which, was the one afterwards stopped by his lordship's executors.

Little did Mr. R. C. Dallas, or his reverend son, think, that this letter, with their injured benefactor's simple and unanswerable commentary, would rise up in judgment against them. They publish, therefore, just so much of it as they think may serve their object; they go so far as to introduce it into a Chancery affidavit; but here is the original to confound their purpose, and to show

forth a portrait of ingratitude, such as has seldom, if ever, been presented to the world.

Who that reads Mr. R. C. Dallas's letter to Lord Byron, but would think that his lordship had been guilty of some atrocious offence towards Mr. Dallas. But we ask—what was the offence? None—none whatever—we speak from a perfect knowledge of the intercourse between the parties, and defy the whole world to disprove the truth of Lord Byron's averment, when he says, as above quoted—“*I never injured Mr. R. C. Dallas, but did him all the good I could, and I am quite unconscious and ignorant of what he means by reproaching me with ungenerous treatment.*” We repeat, Lord Byron was never guilty of any offence towards Mr. Dallas; on the contrary, he “*did him all the good he could;*” yet see how his generous kindness has been rewarded—by a defamatory biography, drawn up by the very object of his benefaction—in which himself and his nearest relations, and his dearest friends, are held up to public detestation; and that, too, under the pretext of serving the cause of religion and morality. We think ourselves fortunate in having it in our power to display these persons in their proper colours, and we congratulate all those Englishmen, who feel a pride in the genius of Byron, that the first formal attack that has been made upon his fame and character, has proceeded from antagonists, who, in attempting to ruin his reputation, have only shown themselves to have been tarnished with vices, perhaps the most degrading, and in many points of view, the most pernicious of any that afflict the human race. It is an old observation, but cannot be too often repeated, that in proportion as we hold sacred all the duties enforced by sincere religious conviction, sound morality, and a real attachment to the just laws by which society is held together and made happy, so we are in the same degree indignant at those who would make a trade of their pretensions to the exclusive possession of moral and political integrity. These persons, whose work, or rather, whose conduct we are reviewing, have tried all the common topics by which they think they may enlist the sympathy of their readers in their favour, to the prejudice of their illustrious benefactor. They have bandied about the clap-trap terms of atheism, scepticism, irreligion, immorality, &c.; but the good sense, nay more, the generosity, the humanity, and the true Christian spirit of their fellow-countrymen, will reject such an unworthy fellowship. They may weep over the failings of Byron; but they will cast from them, with scorn and reprobation, detractors, whose censure bears on the face of it, the unquestionable marks of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. Can any thing be more unpardonable, any thing more unfair, for instance, than for the editor of this volume (the clergyman) to take for granted, that the Conversations of Medwin are authentic, though he himself has given an example of two gross misstatements in them, which would alone throw a doubt over their authenticity; and upon that supposition

to charge Lord Byron with being sunk to the lowest depths of degradation? What are we to say, to this person who, at the same time that he assumes the general truth of the Conversations, makes an exception against that part of them, which represents Lord Byron's dislike of the anti-religious opinions of Mr. Shelley? We ask again, what are we to say to the clergyman, who in referring to the dying declaration of Lord Byron, when he said, "I am not afraid of dying—I am more fit to die than people think," comments upon it in these words:—

"So also that solitary reference to a preparation for death, when death stood visibly by his bed-side ready to receive him, which is related by his servant, and upon which I have known a charitable hope to be hung, amounts to just as much—an *assertion.*"—p. 336.

Whether this passage is intended to throw a doubt over the statement altogether, or to do away with "*the charitable hope*" entertained by others, we defy all our readers to produce a similar instance of malevolent bigotry. This is betraying the "*odium theologicum*" with a vengeance. The reverend editor *will* believe any thing bad of his father's benefactor—he *will not* believe any thing good of him. When adverting to some misstatements contained in the Conversations, he does not throw a doubt over the correctness or character of the reporter; he does just say "if they be true," but he continues to argue as if they were true, and he adduces those misstatements as a proof that Lord Byron had, amongst other lamentable changes, experienced also a loss of memory; and in another place, [p. 333] he supports his charge against Lord Byron's character, by saying, "*witness the fact of his being capable of detailing such a course of life in familiar conversation to me, almost a stranger.*" It is not a fact, and Mr. A. Dallas might have known it was not a fact, but it answered his purpose to assume it as a fact, and to bring it forward as a witness to the truth of his slander—Dallas as an accuser, supported by Medwin as a witness!! Need the friends of Lord Byron fear that the reputation of this illustrious man should suffer by such an attack?

We have as yet only noticed that part of the editor Dallas's charge against Lord Byron, which he seems to have made by virtue of his clerical functions; namely, against his lordship's imputed irreligion: but he is not contented with asserting that Lord Byron had lost all spiritual virtues, this he thinks might injure him only with one class of readers, he proceeds therefore to do his utmost to ruin Lord Byron with all the remaining portion of society, by declaring roundly that his lordship had "consented to forego his title, to be called a man of honour and a gentleman." [p. 334.] This is said by the "man of honour," whose duplicity we have already exposed, by the contrast of his own counter-statements! This is said by the "gentleman" who does all but accuse the sister of his father's benefactor of swearing falsely, and adds other cruel insinuations against that lady and other persons, which he knows

he may utter with impunity. If any of our readers should refer to the worthless book we are reviewing, they will perceive that this imputation against Lord Byron is, as well as the others before noticed, founded on the assumption that Medwin's Conversations were really uttered by Lord Byron, and uttered "without any injunctions to secrecy;" although, as we before observed, no man of the slightest decency, honour, or regard for the common rules even of controversy, would have been bold enough, not to say base enough, to take the authenticity of those Conversations at once for granted, and that too in spite of inherent evidence, noticed by the writer himself, of their want of truth.

We have to apologize to our readers for attracting their attention to the publication of Mr. Dallas and his son, whom we have dealt with rather as unworthy men, than as wretched authors. As, however, some persons may be curious to know what qualifications, what knowledge of the writings of Lord Byron, Mr. Dallas the elder could boast of, when he sat down to develop the character, and appreciate the genius of this great poet, we will turn to page 34 of the Recollections, where we find it written,

"It is not difficult to observe the workings of Lord Byron's mind, in another alteration which he made (in his English Bards, &c.). In the part where he speaks of Bowles, he makes a reference to Pope's deformity of person. The passage was originally printed in the country thus:"

Then follow the lines.

"He afterwards altered the whole of this passage except the two first lines, and in its place appeared the following"—

After giving the lines, Mr. Dallas adds

"I have very little doubt that the alteration of the whole of this passage was occasioned by the reference to Pope's personal deformity, which Lord Byron had made in it."

And then Mr. Dallas goes on to remark very sagely upon Lord Byron's susceptibility upon the subject of personal deformity, concluding thus:

"This temporary cessation of a very acute susceptibility is a phenomenon of the human mind, for which it is difficult to account; unless perhaps it be, that the thoughts are sometimes carried into a train, where, though they cross these tender cords, the mind is so occupied as not to leave room for the jealous feeling which they would otherwise excite. Thus, Lord Byron, in the ardour of composition, had not time to admit the ideas which, in a less excited moment, would rapidly have risen in connexion with the thought of Pope's deformity of person; and the greater vanity of talent superseded the lesser vanity of person, and produced the same effect of deadening his susceptibility, in the conversation to which I allude."—p. 38.

If the author of "Aubrey" had but read, or had not forgotten Lord Byron's preface to the second edition of English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, he would have spared us all this fine writing, for that preface explains that "*phenomenon of the human mind, for which it is difficult to account,*" and which this poor writer has accounted for so profoundly. That preface tells us, "In the first edition of this satire, published anonymously, fourteen lines

on the subject of Bowles's Pope, were written and inserted at the request of an ingenious friend of mine, who has now in the press a volume of poetry. In the present edition they are erased and some of my own substituted in their stead; my only reason for this being—that which I conceive would operate with any other person in the same manner—a determination not to publish with my name, any production which was not entirely and exclusively my own composition”—p. vi.

After the above specimen of the fitness of Mr. R. C. Dallas for doing what the editor, in the title-page of the Recollections, calls “detailing the progress of Lord Byron’s literary career,” we ask, do our readers wish to hear any more of this metaphysical expounder of the phenomena of the human mind? We believe not: and we fancy that this single instance of ignorance and absurdity will show his character as an author to be exactly on a par with his credit as a man.

On Mr. Medwin’s work we shall content ourselves with making just such a comment as may satisfy the world that we were not speaking at random when we expressed our disbelief in the authenticity of the Conversations which Mr. Alexander Dallas has made the basis of his charge against his father’s benefactor. We flatter ourselves we shall “do the state some service” in showing how worthy a coadjutor this Mr. Alexander Dallas has called to his aid, for the purpose of blackening the character of Lord Byron. This service we shall perform by simply contrasting what we know, and what we pledge ourselves to the public we know, to be facts, with the assertions contained in the Conversations.*

As Mr. Medwin has been a dragoon, and as, moreover, he has recently sent a letter to England of a very warlike complexion, we suppose we must content ourselves with saying that he has misheard, not misrepresented, Lord Byron. Certain, however, it is, that the Conversations, such as they now appear, never could have been uttered by his lordship; who, amongst his other noble qualities, was distinguished for a scrupulous regard, even in trifles, to truth.

To begin then with the beginning—

MR. MEDWIN’S TITLE-PAGE.

“Conversations of Lord Byron, noted during a residence with his lordship at Pisa, in the years 1821, and 1822.

THE FACT.

Mr. Medwin never resided with Lord Byron at Pisa, or any where else. He came to Pisa, in November, 1821; he left Pisa in March, 1822; he returned to Pisa the 18th of August, 1822, and left that place on the 28th of August. During these periods he occasionally dined and rode out with his lordship.

* The Editor of the Museum has omitted several pages of the contrasts spoken of. The references are to the pages of the English edition.

"I knew very few of the Genevese. Hentsch was very civil to me; and I have a great respect for Sismondi. I was forced to return the civilities of one of their professors, by asking him, and an old gentleman, a friend of Gray's, to dine with me. I had gone out to sail early in the morning, and the wind prevented me from returning in time for dinner. I understand that I offended them mortally"—p. 15.

MR. MEDWIN in his own person says.

"He always has pistols in his holster, and eight or ten pair, by the first makers in London, carried by his courier"—p. 17.

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON speaks.

"I have been concerned," said he, "in many duels, as second; but only in two as principal; one was with Hobhouse, before I became intimate with him"—p. 18.

"Shortly after the plot was discovered, I received several anonymous letters, advising me to discontinue my forest rides."—p. 37.

"I had a magazine of 100 stand of arms in the house."—p. 36.

"They were exiled, and their possessions confiscated"—p. 37.

"If they could have got sufficient proof they would have arrested me; but no one betrayed me"—p. 38.

"An event occurred at this time, at Ravenna, that made a deep impression on me. I alluded to it in *Don Juan*. The military commandant of the place, who, though suspected of being secretly a carbonaro, was too powerful a man to be arrested, was assassinated opposite to my palace: a spot, perhaps, selected by choice for the commission of the crime. The measures which were adopted to screen the murderer, proved the assassination to have taken place by order of the police."

"I had my foot in the stirrup at my usual hour of exercise, when my horse started at the report of a gun—on looking up, I perceived a man throw down a carbine, and run away at full speed, and another stretched upon the pavement a few yards from me.

The invitation to the Genevese professor did not come from Lord Byron; it was an imprudent liberty taken by his domestic physician, and Lord Byron was not detained from the dinner-table by the wind. He staid away on purpose, saying to the doctor, "as you asked these guests yourself, you may entertain them yourself."

The first part of the statement is true—the second untrue—a courier carry eight or ten pair of pistols!! This courier did occasionally carry one pair of pistols.

Lord Byron was never concerned in a duel in his life, either as second or principal. He was once rather near fighting a duel—and that was with an officer of the staff of general Oakes, at Malta.

Lord Byron did not receive any anonymous letter on this occasion; a placard was posted on the walls near his house, in which he was mentioned as protector of the Carbonari.

Lord Byron had five or six carbines or muskets, and five or six pair of pistols, ready for his travelling service.

The writer speaks of the counts Gamba—their possessions were not confiscated.

The papal government never evinced such an intention. Cardinal Gonzalvi was always extremely well-disposed towards Lord Byron.

It did not occur at this time; it happened five months before.

He was a persecutor of the carbonari, and it was suspected that he was killed by a carbonaro.

The commandant was at the head of the police, and directed the police against the carbonari.

The whole of what is put into Lord Byron's mouth, as to Lord Byron, is a romance—the truth is as follows:

It was eight o'clock in the evening—Lord Byron was going into his bed-room to change his neck-cloth, in order to walk to an evening conversazione, accompanied by his servant, Battista Falsieri. He heard a musket shot, and he sent Battista to inquire the cause.

Battista went, and reported that the commandant had been killed at a little distance from the house. Lord Byron then went into the street himself, and ordered the wounded man to be carried into his house. Accordingly, Battista carried him on his shoulders, and laid him on the bed of Lord Byron's valet. No one was seen to run away, but Battista found a carbine, yet warm, on the ground. Lord Byron detailed the circumstances, at the time, in a letter to his friends in England; and since the appearance of the pretended Conversations, those who were present at the scene have been questioned, and have furnished the above facts. It may be mentioned also, that in Don Juan the time of this accident is mentioned as being "eight" in the evening.

"I am sorry," said he, "not to have a copy of my memoirs to show you—I gave them to Moore, or rather to Moore's little boy, at Venice. I remember saying, here are £2000 for you, my young friend." —p. 40.

Mr. Moore had no little boy with him at Venice. Lord Byron never said, here are £2000 for you my young friend—he never did fix any price which his MSS. might be likely to procure.

Mr. Moore did make an observation to Lord Byron upon receiving the Memoirs, which gave rise to the story that has accordingly been made part of the Conversations.

After such a misstatement of Lord Byron's words on the delivery of the MSS. to Mr. Moore's *little boy*, to quote any other part of the fabrication respecting these Memoirs would give it unmerited importance.

"After the ordeal was over, we set off for a country seat of Sir Ralph's; and I was surprised at the arrangements for the journey, and somewhat out of humour to find a lady's maid stuck between me and my bride. It was rather too early to assume the husband; so I was forced to submit, but it was not with a very good grace"—pp. 47, 48.

LORD BYRON IN MR. MEDWIN'S BOOK.

"We had a house in town, gave dinner parties, had separate carriages, and launched into every sort of extravagance. This could not last long. My wife's £10,000 soon melted away," &c.—pp. 49, 50.

Lord and Lady Byron did not give dinner parties; they had not separate carriages; they did not launch out into any extravagance.

The whole of Lady Byron's fortune was put into settlement, and could not be melted away.

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON.

"Imagine my astonishment to receive, immediately on her arrival in London, a few lines from her father, of a very dry and unaffectionate nature, beginning "Sir," and ending with saying, that his daughter should never see me again"—p. 51.

MR. MEDWIN MAKES LORD BYRON SAY,

"I was abused in the public prints; made the common talk of private companies; hissed as I went to the House of Lords; insulted in the streets," &c.—p. 62.

"The Examiner was the only paper that dared say a word in my defence."

"I had my wife's portion to repay, and I was determined to add £10,000 more of my own to it, which I did"—p. 64.

"I lost my father when I was only six years of age"—p. 72.

"It was very different from Mrs. Malaprop's saying, 'Ah, good dear Mr. Malaprop, I never loved him till he was dead'—p. 73.

"When I was at Athens, there was an edict in force similar to that of Ali's, except that the mode of punishment was different, it was necessary, therefore, that all love affairs should be carried on with the greatest privacy. I was very fond at that time of a Turkish girl—ay, fond of her as I have been of few women"—pp. 121, 122.

"My real Vampyre I gave at the end of Mazeppa, something in the same way that I told it one night at Diodati, when Monk Lewis and Shelley and his wife were present. The latter sketched on that occasion the outline of her Pygmalion story, the modern Prometheus"—p. 149.

"I will give you a specimen of some epigrams I am in the habit of sending Hobhouse, to whom I wrote on my first wedding day," &c.—p. 155.

THE FACT.

It was not on Lady Byron's arrival in London that Sir R. Noel wrote the letter to Lord Byron. It was on Lady Byron's arrival at Kirby-Mallory in Leicestershire, that her father wrote to Lord Byron. Sir Ralph's letter was a long letter, not a few lines, and it began, "My Lord," not "Sir." It was dated Feb. 2, 1816.

Lord Byron was never hissed as he went to the House of Lords; nor insulted in the streets.

The Examiner was not the only paper that defended Lord Byron. The Morning Chronicle was a zealous advocate of his lordship; and Mr. Perry, the editor, had a personal altercation with Sir R. Noel on the subject.

This is altogether contrary to the fact, as those who witnessed the deed of separation between Lord and Lady Byron can testify.

Lord Byron was born in January, 1788, and his father died in August, 1791; so that Lord Byron was only three years and a half old when his father died.

Mrs. Malaprop's words are very different; and Lord Byron was singularly accurate as well as apposite in his quotations. The pretended conversation makes him neither one nor the other.

No other contradiction is necessary than to mention, that the girl whose life Lord Byron saved at Athens, was not an object of his lordship's attachment—but of that of his lordship's Turkish servant.

The conversation said to have been held at Diodati is fictitious. With the exception of Mr. Lewis, no one told a tale, and Mrs. Shelley never saw the late Mr. Lewis in her life. The Preface to Frankenstein shows that the story was invented before Lord Byron's and Mr. Shelley's tour on the lake, and Mr. Lewis did not arrive at Diodati till some time after.

Mr. Hobhouse was with Lord Byron on his wedding day: his lordship could not write to him on that day. This fiction is the more unlucky, as the Con-

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON

"He [Mr. Hobhouse] was present at my marriage"—p. 416.

"And another on his sending me the congratulations of the season, which ended in some foolish way like this:
" ' You may wish me returns of the season,
Let us prithee have none of the day.' "
p. 156.

MR. MEDWIN IN HIS OWN PERSON.

"I afterwards had reason to think that the ode was Lord Byron's; that he was piqued at none of his own being mentioned, and after he had praised the verses so highly, could not own them"**—pp. 167, 168.

* I am corroborated in this opinion lately by a lady, whose brother received them many years ago from Lord Byron, in his own hand-writing.

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON SAYS.

"Murray published a letter I wrote to him from Venice, which might have seemed an idle display of vanity; but the object of my writing it was, to contradict what Turner had asserted, about the impossibility of crossing the Hellespont from the Abydos to the Sestos side, in consequence of the tide. One is as easy as the other; we did both"—pp. 168, 169.

"We were to have undertaken this feat some time before, but put it off in consequence of the coldness of the water"—p. 170.

THE FACT.
versation-writer afterwards mentions, that Mr. Hobhouse was with Lord Byron on the day alluded to.

Mr. Hobhouse never wrote any such letter, nor Lord Byron any such answer.

The truth has been already discovered respecting this ode on the death of Sir John Moore, and those who knew Lord Byron will appreciate the vulgar speculation as to the reason of his concealing his being the author of the poem.

Lord Byron did *not* do both, he only swam from the Sestos to the Abydos side.

Lord Byron and Mr. Ekenhead did undertake this feat some time before—they did not "put it off" in consequence of the coldness of the water—they *gave it up* in consequence of the coldness of the water, when about half over the strait.

If the Conversation-writer had read the note to Lord Byron's lines written to commemorate this exploit, he would not have framed this conversation in this way.

It will hardly be believed, but it is true, that this drinking song, which the writer cannot resist "presenting the public with," as being written by Lord Byron one morning, or perhaps one evening, (conscientious alternative) after one of our dinners at Pisa, was presented to the public just as far back as 1809. The song is printed in a volume of miscellanies, edited by Mr. Hobhouse, to which Lord Byron was a contributor, under the signature L. B. If this be not sufficient to stamp the true character of these Conversations, perhaps the next specimen may; it is, if possible, more astonishing.

MR. MEDWIN SAYS. IN HIS OWN PERSON.

"I cannot resist presenting the public with a drinking song, composed one morning, or, perhaps, evening, after one of our dinners.

"Fill the goblet again, for I never before

Felt the glow—that now gladdens my heart to its core."—pp. 193, 194.

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON.

"*The leprosy of lust*, I discover, too, is not mine. *'Thou tremblest—'tis with age, then'*—which I am accused of borrowing from Otway, was taken from the Old Bailey proceedings. Some judge observed to the witness, "Thou tremblest;" "*'Tis with cold, then,*" was the reply."—p. 209.

"My differences with Murray are not over. When he purchased "*Cain*," the two "*Foscari*," and "*Sardanapalus*," he sent me a deed which you may remember witnessing. Well, after its return to England, it was discovered that it contained a clause which had been introduced without my knowledge, a clause by which I bound myself to offer Mr. Murray all my future compositions"—p. 258.

"My second canto of "*Childe Harold*" was then just published"—p. 323.

MR. MEDWIN'S LORD BYRON.

"I have received, said he, from my sister, a lock of Napoleon's hair, which is of a beautiful black"—p. 361.

"An order was issued for them to leave the Tuscan states in four days; and on their embarkation for Genoa"—p. 382.

MR. MEDWIN puts in LORD BYRON'S mouth.

"Since I have been abroad I have received many civilities from the Americans. Amongst the rest, I was acquainted with a captain of one of their frigates, lying in the Leghorn Roads, and used occasionally to dine on board the ship"—p. 406.

"Since you left us," said Lord Byron, "I have seen Hobhouse for a few days," &c.—p. 415.

THE FACT.

Who does not know that this famous speech, which the Conversation-writer made his Lord Byron say, was made in the OLD BAILEY—was uttered by "*Bailly*," the Mayor of Paris, on his way to the scaffold? That the real Lord Byron should make so ludicrous a blunder is morally impossible.

Mr. Murray has already shown that Lord Byron could not have made this statement. For that Capt. Medwin did not witness the deed alluded to, and that the deed, when inspected, was found to contain no such condition as that mentioned by the Conversation-writer. The publisher was more sagacious than the writer, and would not insert the passage in italics which contained a statement so easily contradicted, but he gave them to Mr. Murray on that gentleman's application, and it is to him that the public are indebted for the detection of this fabrication.

The framer of the Conversations does not seem to have recollect that the first and second canto of "*Childe Harold*" were published together, and never appeared separately.

The lock of hair sent by Mrs Leigh was just eight hairs, half an inch long, and all the hairs were either white or of a grisly gray.

The counts Gamba did "not embark for Genoa," they rode to Lucca. This opportunity may be taken of stating, that count Peter Gamba, who is now in London, denies the accuracy of the statements respecting his family; and declares that Lord Byron could not have uttered the conversation imputed to him on that subject.

Lord Byron did not "*dine occasionally*" on board any American ship at Leghorn—he breakfasted once on board the Constitution frigate.

It is impossible that Lord Byron should have told Capt. Medwin that he had seen Mr. Hobhouse at the time alluded to; that is to say, in August, 1822. Mr. Hobhouse did not arrive at Pisa nor see Lord Byron until the 15th of September, 1822, after which time

MR. MEDWIN speaking in his own person,

sic.

"On the 28th of August I parted from Lord Byron with increased regret and a sadness that looked like presentiment." —p. 422.

THE FACT.

Capt. Medwin, according to his own statement, never saw Lord Byron, for he arrived at Pisa on the 18th of August, and left it on the 28th of that month; and when Mr. Hobhouse arrived at Pisa, Captain Medwin was gone. It will be in vain to say that there has been a slip of the pen or the press, and that for the 28th of August, should be read the 28th of September, for Lord Byron quitted Pisa on the 22d or 23d of that month, the day after Mr. Hobhouse. So that the whole of this conversation must be a pure fiction, and must have been invented for the sake of making it appear that Lord Byron was in the habit of talking confidentially with Mr. Medwin respecting his private friendships.

Descending from the author to the editor, and from the editor to the publisher of this volume, we feel inclined to remonstrate with the latter respectable personage for not contriving to make a book (an art in which he ought to be an adept) without taking an entire article from the third number of our Review, equivalent in length to one-fourth of the whole Conversations. A little more invention on the part of the Conversation-seller, and a little more liberality on that of the Conversation buyer, would have rendered such an expedient unnecessary; and as we like to choose our own company, we really must protest against being forced to hunt in couples with Mr. Colburn's authors. We trust that this is the last time we shall have to complain of such a disagreeable connexion.

In concluding our comments on the pseudo-biographers of Lord Byron, we must confess that we have been obliged to adopt a mode and style of criticism extremely uncongenial to our inclinations, as well as foreign to the purpose of that species of publication which we have undertaken to conduct. It is our business to review the works and public conduct of our contemporaries, not to enter into investigations which require a reference to their domestic history. But when an author garbles a series of letters, or becomes in any way an inventor, rather than a narrator, of biography, he is to be dealt with rather as an informer than as a writer. This can be done only by the production of such documents as he may have suppressed, or by the citation of such facts as ought to be contrasted with his fictions. There is no other corrective for spurious biography, and if those who can, and who alone can, destroy the credibility of that pernicious species of imposture, refrain from so necessary an exposure, the character of celebrated men, as well as the happiness of their associates, will henceforth be at the mercy of any pretended historian of their private life; and the justice of the living will no longer extend its protection to the memory of the dead.

Just as we write the concluding line of this article, appears Mr. Southey's furious epistle, which we are sorry for—because it so happens that we have been in the habit of thinking the laureate not utterly destitute of all the qualities which are requisite for civil and social life. But what excuse can we make for this letter? We have before said, that nothing can be more unpardonable than the taking Medwin's Conversations for authentic, merely for the sake of sounding on them a charge against Lord Byron; with this feeling (in which we are sure every impartial man in the kingdom will sympathize with us) we need not say what we think of Mr. Southey's conduct on this occasion. That Mr. Southey might fairly refute assertions put into the mouth of Lord Byron we do not deny; but that he should make that denial the pretext for a formal and most unmeasured invective against his deceased antagonist, was not to be expected, except from a person, in whose breast the jealousy of a rival, and the rancour of a renegade, had silenced every humane and generous feeling. We did not suspect that, in spirit, Mr. Southey would ever show himself of the hare species,

“Whose valour plucks dead lions by the beard;”

and with this specimen of posthumous animosity, we will contrast the conduct and sentiments of Lord Byron himself, as displayed in a circumstance with which we are personally acquainted. When Lord Byron transmitted his first manuscript of *Don Juan* to England, it was found that it opened with a long dedication in XII stanzas, to BOB SOUTHEY, in which the laureate was handled with no little severity. His lordship's correspondent recommended the omission of the dedication, upon grounds which his lordship did not perhaps think were tenable; but he did consent to leave out the stanzas, when he altered his mind as to putting his name to the poem, and he wrote the following direction opposite to the lines to be erased:—

“As the poem is to be published anonymously, OMIT the dedication. I wont attack the dog in the dark; such things are for scoundrels and renegadoes like himself.”

Lord Byron thought himself deeply injured by Mr. Southey, and he had otherwise an antipathy for the laureate, which he took no pains to conceal; but he still thought, it seems, that all modes of attack were not allowable even against this object of his aversion. In this particular Mr. Southey has certainly shown himself much less scrupulous than his lordship, and, unless we think much better of the laureate than he deserves, the time will come when he will be heartily ashamed of this pitiful insult over the ashes of the illustrious dead.

LORD BYRON--PAST AND PRESENT.

The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (1822-1842); Aug 1, 1824; 5, 26;
American Periodicals
pg. 187

FROM KNIGHT'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR OCTOBER, 1823.

LORD BYRON—PAST AND PRESENT.

THERE was a fanciful theory among the ancients, respecting the souls of men; they imagined that the material frame, while alive, was governed by a four-fold principle, or, perhaps, four different principles—of which, after death, the first and noblest betook itself to the stars; the second was resolved into air; the third repaired to the Elysian Fields; and the fourth hovered about the tomb of the defunct, and continued to interest itself in the affairs of the body. This was the shade, or *umbra*: and if we may judge of their different functions during life, from their destinies after it, we should say that this last and meanest of the four had always possessed an undue preponderance over the other three in the composition of Lord Byron. We perceive him all along a discontented spirit, restlessly repining after lost corporeal enjoyments, dissatisfied with his present state, yet willing, at all hazards, to ally himself with the body, for better and for worse. In his thoughts that lie beyond the grave, we find him still *umbra*. Of the lofty destiny of the first of the four—the return of the fiery particle to the stellar sphere—he seems to have no idea. The

aëry dissolution of the second he appears rather to long for than desire—

“—————Oh that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound;
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—*born and dying*,
With the blest tone that made me!”—MANFRED.

Still less does he look forward to a paradisiacal state, in which the immaterial part shall become heir to a *quasi-corpus*, and enjoy, in some visionary form, an individual and blessed existence. These heaven-peoplings he attributes to “our own desiring phantasy!” Some middle, uncomfortable, life-in-death kind of being, such as that of the *umbra*, is all that remains. We speak of him as he appears in his earlier productions; in which, however, frequent bursts of the higher nature are manifest. At present, we cannot help fancying that they have all betaken themselves to their several destinations—that the Author of *Mansfred* and *Childe Harold* is, indeed, deceased—and that the “*Island*,” and the latter cantos of “*Don Juan*,” have been written by his lordship’s dead body, under the sole dictation of his *umbra*. On our word, they smell strangely of mortality!

Lord Byron has long been considered by the *public*, not only of this, but of all other countries to which English literature is familiar, as “the first of living poets.” His reputation has been as complete, in every respect, as any man treading the higher walks of poetry could expect in his own life-time; and more extensive, we think, than one whose views aspired to permanent fame ought, in prudence, to desire,—at least, during the early part of his career. He has not merely gained an elegant notoriety in the upper circles as a writer of fashionable levities, like the wits of Charles the Second’s time, nor won the ladies’ hearts through the medium of some sweet and affecting tale in rhyme, to be bound in green morocco for boarding-school presents, like Campbell, and many more we could name, in our own. He has not *merely* come into notice from prosecutions by the Attorney-General, or by publications which the Lord Chancellor has excluded from the pale of the laws of copyright; nor does he, in any degree, stand in the condition of those who, like some of our friends, recommend themselves to the purses and the praises of the pseudo-moralists, by the delightful tendency of their works, and the judicious intermixture of religious pretension, with lisping passion. He has not merely arrested, for a brief while, the attention of poetry-readers, by the lucky adoption of some taking mannerism, some affected tricksy prettiness, like Barry Cornwall; nor does his fame rest as Wordsworth’s long did, on the sympathy and admiration of a few enthusiastic individuals of peculiar directions of feeling and uncommon habits of thought. In none of these ways has he courted the suffrages of any *part*, however large, of the reading world. He has been read, admired, and imitated all over Europe, and in this country by per-

sons of all ranks and professions, ages, and sexes. His poems (his earlier ones at least) are to be found in the drawing-room of the peer and the boudoir of his lady,—under the pillow of his daughter, and the prayer-book of her grandmother;—the tradesmen—the country-clergymen—the very squire of the parish himself—all read Lord Byron: nay, even in the cottage of the rustic, we fear, he has not unfrequently superseded the “Whole Duty of Man,” and the works of that dear ally of virtue, and unconscious poet, John Bunyan.

How this high and wide repute was originally obtained, and whether it was at any time fully deserved,—whether there be not in poetry, as in painting and music, a legitimate appeal from the voice of the many, to the judgment of the few,—from the many whose habits and educations render them not merely unacquainted with the medium through which the impressions producible by poetry are conveyed, but insusceptible of the impressions themselves,—to the few whose minds have been educated for the inquiry, and whose attentions have been long occupied by it: whether popular favour, however extensive, be in itself a proof of sterling excellence, or an earnest of future fame; and whether, if this point be determined in the negative, the effect produced by Lord Byron’s works may not be traced partly to temporary and occasional causes, and partly to an origin, which though of an universal nature, reflects no great credit either on the author or his readers, and which, at all events, is utterly unconnected with *poetical* power: these and many other questions, of considerable interest, might fairly be discussed on the present occasion with less than the usual license granted to essays of this description. But, in truth, our business is not now with Lord Byron, idolized for his supposed genius, and pardoned sometimes even by the devout for its misuse,—the fine, handsome, gloomy, vicious, cravatless hero of lady novelists;—but with Lord Byron, somewhat fat and faded, the author of a dull poem that has made very little noise, and of a wicked poem which has overshot its mark by its superlative grossness. Indeed, we have alluded to his lordship’s earlier works, principally to mark the contrast exhibited between them, and these his last productions. The decline and fall of genius is a theme from which much instruction, moral as well as literary, may be gleaned,—a sort of instruction, moreover, peculiarly called for in the present time, when we have so many notable instances of fallen poets. From these we have selected Lord Byron, as the most conspicuous of all these lapsed Davids; for we think that he has made the deepest and most irrecoverable descent,—

“ Into what pit thou seest,
From what height fallen.”

There are two questions to be settled:—First, what Lord Byron *was*; and, Secondly, What Lord Byron *is*.

In regard to the first, we must candidly avow that we have

never been among the most devoted worshippers of this remarkable writer. He was never, we think, a *great* poet, properly speaking; he never understood the human heart, deeply or extensively; what he knew of his own extended little further than to its peculiar traits; his introspection is never that of a philosopher—he is unable to abstract the individual; hence he falls into an error, which no observation can correct,—that of multiplying his own portrait, with a mere change of costume, and fancying that each copy is a different person. He is like a man who should believe not merely that other people have two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, because he has the same number, but that every one has the same moles, warts, and wens, in the same places with himself. Not merely are all his heroes Lord Byrons, but all persons of every description, where they are characterized at all, are made of his own likeness, *mutatis mutandis*. This was very well for a time; Lord Byron was an interesting personage, and his poems, considered merely as confessions, or pieces of auto-biography, naturally excited much curiosity, and were certainly entitled to considerable praise; but, it would not do always; every one, sooner or later, got tired of this perpetual masquerading, and something else was demanded; but little else was forthcoming. When his characters ceased to be Lord Byrons, they ceased to be any thing at all.

As a descriptive poet, he does not, in our opinion, rank at all higher; he has no gifted vision that we can discover;—he seems to look on the external world very much with the eyes of any other discontented mortal; and what he sees he reports with no peculiar vividness or graphic power;—he has not even the picturesque eye of Scott; far less can he cope with Shelley in the subtlety, the intensity, or the luxuriance of fancy displayed by that extraordinary poet in his descriptions; in a still lower grade of inferiority does he stand, (in this particular at least to him,) whose “hourly neighbour” is, or has been —

“Beauty, a living presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal forms,
That craft of delicate spirits hath composed
From earth’s materials.”

Perhaps, indeed, we give too wide a sense to the term “descriptive,” the passages on which we found our opinion being almost all of a mixed nature, and deriving a blended interest from the ethical, imaginative, or fanciful colouring thrown over them. Wordsworth, whenever he is himself, is always more or less creative; he is never a mere limner, or copyist of nature; and though in Lord Byron’s pictures the mind of the author is sufficiently visible, yet of a very different kind is the moody tristification of the one poet, from the “holy passion” of the other.

As a philosophical and didactic poet, we will not presume to form a light or hasty opinion of him. Excellence of this sort must always depend, in a great measure, on the truth and usefulness of

the opinions promulgated, especially where the subject is of a moral nature; and though much power may be displayed in the conception of false and hollow doctrines, and especially in their adaptation to their purposes of poetry, yet this is not of itself sufficient. Hence the number of those who think Lord Byron a great philosophical poet, is confined to such as consider his opinions, in the main, true: and of this, we hope and believe, inconsiderable body, the more spiritual part do not, we fancy, look upon him as having done, or as likely to do, complete justice to their creed, either as a poet or a man. But this is a grave matter, which we shall pass by for the present.

Lastly, and on this head we insist more strongly than on any of the former, we cannot think that the renowned writer ever wielded the mighty instrument of language with that mastery to be expected, nay, demanded, from "the first poet of the age." This, in our opinion, main requisite in the poetical character, is so little regarded by the public in our times, that we believe the majority of readers would grant all that should be required on this head, and not think a whit the worse of the author for the deficiency. We shall not, therefore, in attempting to substantiate this charge, exhaust the reader's patience with the minutiae of verbal criticism, but refer him to the works themselves, which he may compare, if he pleases, (not with the writings of our best elder writers, which, however, is the fair test; but) with many of his contemporaries,—in particular, with the lyrical ballads of Wordsworth, the Revolt of Islam by Shelley, and the Translation of Dante by Cary. We believe he will not be found first, or second, either in accuracy of diction, beauty of expression, or richness and propriety of versification. Can this be said of any other great poet?

Still, however, there was much—very much—to admire in his lordship's earlier works; quite enough to form a sad contrast with his later efforts. He painted some of the passions with great force, though with little delicacy. His situations were simple and affecting; his narrative vigorous and rapid. These were his general merits. Occasionally his thoughts were profound, his reflections grand and solemn, his views grasping, and distinguished by a certain compactness in their delineation, which contrasts very favourably with the parallel passages in Wordsworth. He is often very pathetic, and, in a few instances, even tender and gentle. One picture he has left to posterity, which, like "the Misers" of Quintin Matsys, alone entitles him to considerable renown,—that of the pallid and hopeless voluptuary, who, to use an expression of Paley's, has "used up" his old pleasures, and who cannot, or will not, find new. *It is his own creation.*

The second question, what Lord Byron *is?* presents a subject of more painful examination.

Our opinion of what Lord Byron's poetical merits *were*, has been fully and freely expressed. In this inquiry we have, as far as possible, avoided all allusion to the writer's creed in philosophy

or in politics—to the imputed vices of his earlier years, or the avowed misfortunes of his domestic life—to the circumstances which self-banished him from his own country, or to the predilections which fixed him on foreign shores. These particulars, however, make up a very large portion of his best productions; and as his poems are thus essentially egotistical, we might, without impropriety, revert to the passions, and feelings, and prejudices, which form the materials upon which that egotism has had to work. To dismiss this matter as lightly as our duty will permit, we should say that the Lord Byron of Childe Harold, and of the Corsair, is a being of excessively acute sensations,—of an intense capacity either for love or hatred,—of a deep reverence for the sublimities and beauties of nature, subjected by the pride of talent to a cold and heartless scepticism,—of a strong sense of real or imaginary injuries, working itself up into a reckless scorn of social life,—and of an undisciplined abandonment to the excitements which chance may present to him, and a willing prostration to the spells which inferior intellects and lower destinies may weave around him. But up to a period which even his warmest admirers must have marked with wonder and pity, Lord Byron was not, in the egotistical reflection of his own mind, a systematic panader to the evil passions and betraying thoughts of the vicious and the ignorant. He surrendered himself, indeed, to his genius, for better and for worse; but he did not, with a deliberate purpose, subject his genius to the most grovelling impurities, and the most humiliating enmities. In the like proportion, though there was an occasional sameness and lassitude about some of his productions, there was not that perpetual *imbecility* which is the evidence of a mind losing its discrimination between modes and degrees of excellence, and resigning itself to the low flattery which suggests, and the absorbing vanity which believes, that the task of comparison and selection may be fitly spared. The intimate union between the corruption of the heart and the degradation of the intellect, was never so manifest as in the productions which Lord Byron, under the auspices of his new allies, has inflicted on his country within the last six months;—their poetical faults and their moral crimes are so enormous, that we cannot but address him in a passage of one of those poems in which he had not ceased to feel as a high-hearted denizen of that land whose greatest spirits have ever been her purest:—

“This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive.”—MANFRED.

That Lord Byron is now “less than archangel ruined,” we may honestly affirm; and we refer to the six last cantos of Don Juan for the proof.

The first and the greatest of Lord Byron's present sins, is his outrageous contempt of those awful and mysterious subjects which even the sceptic, if he have any regard to the decencies of life, feels it his duty not to disturb. In Childe Harold, and in other of his productions, in which he bursts forth into a tribute to the sublimity and sweetness of the external world, we have not many direct allusions to the ennobling poetical creed of Wordsworth and of Coleridge; the beauty of the universe is worshipped, without any very deep feeling towards the great Spirit in which it lives, and moves, and has its being. But still there is *something like* a faith hovering over the dark waters of his soul; he has a sense, though not a very vivid one, of the mysterious harmony of creation; and he looks upward, though with a dim and faltering eye, to the great principle of a Creator. He seldom speaks of revelation, but he does not insult it. He thus addresses the magnificent temple of St. Peter's at Rome:—

Worthiest of God, *the holy and the true!*
Since Zion's desolation, when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be,
Of earthly structures, in his honour piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, glory, strength, and beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of *worship undefiled.*"

We must sully our pages by quoting twelve lines of impiety from the eleventh canto of Don Juan:—

"I've grown lately rather phthisical:
I don't know what the reason is,—the air,
Perhaps; but as I suffer from the shocks
Of illness, I grow much more orthodox.

The first attack at once proved the Divinity;
(But *that* I never doubted, nor the devil)
The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
The third, the usual origin of evil;
The fourth at once established the whole Trinity
. On so uncontrovertible a level,
That I devoutly wished the three were four,
On purpose to believe so much the more."

When we compare Lord Byron's present fury of profaneness with his former *subdued* pretensions to the glory of a scoffer, low as we think even of his past aspirations after a something holier than this brief life, we must exclaim with himself,

"Could he have kept his spirit to that flight,
He had been happy."

Of the occasional voluptuousness of Lord Byron's earlier poems, we are not anxious to be the apologists; but we most conscientiously believe, that his favourite "Childe Harold," his "Giaour," his "Conrad," his "Selim," possessed a code of morality of which his Lordship is now incapable of forming a conception. They were bold, and occasionally tender, admirers of female beauty; votaries of passion in its wildest and most dangerous shapes;

but they had the delicacy as well as the strength of vivid fictions; and that they are essentially fictitious, we are bound to believe Lord Byron's deliberate and repeated affirmations. In his first preface to Childe Harold, he says, with the modesty and ingenuous simplicity of youth, in allusion to the popular opinion, that his hero was a "real personage,"—"In some very trivial particulars, and those merely local, there might be grounds for such a notion; but in the main points, *I should hope*, none whatever." Again, "he never was intended as an example, further than to show, that early perversion^P of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures, and disappointments in new ones." But with all the faults of these personages, be they creations or be they copies, they possess nothing of that gloating sensuality which distinguishes the worn-out debauchee,—of that devotion to prurient images and filthy allusions, which the man of principle and the man of taste equally banish from their thoughts and their conversation,—of that despicable wit which delights in raising a blush on female cheeks, and in teaching a young man, just entering the labyrinth of life, the shortest way to the most complete extinction of those hopes and feelings, which can alone guide him through its dim and dreary paths. This is the present most perfect degradation of Lord Byron. Assuming his own character, and speaking in his own person, he is plunging deeper and deeper in the mire of his profaneness; and though we cannot sully our pages with a single passage of the abominable outrages upon decency which the latter cantos of Don Juan contain, we must openly say, for a warning to all those who, in this stage of license, choose still to maintain the discipline of experience over the levity of youth, that Lord Byron must cease to be reckoned as the compeer of a Scott, a Wordsworth, or a Coleridge; but must be looked upon and execrated as the imitator and the rival of a Rochester, a Cleveland, or a Wilkes.

In Lord Byron's earlier poems, and we speak especially of Childe Harold, upon which his fame must mainly rest, there was a coldness, we had almost said a sourness, in his allusions to his country, which wisdom might condemn, but which charity would pity. He had evidently suffered much in the land which had given him birth; and though a by-stander might pretend to distinguish how much of that suffering ought to be ascribed to external circumstances, and how much to Lord Byron's habits and modes of thought, a true searcher of the human heart might forgive him, if the stream of his affections, being diverted from its natural course, had, in its overflowings, become at one time stagnant in the weeds of a morbid sensibility, and at another fearfully rapid in the shallows of a misjudging violence. The misfortunes of Lord Byron had evidently not administered the proper food to his intellect; they had neither made him calmer or less presumptuous. But the world was not prepared to expect that the pent-up soul would discharge itself in bitter denunciations against his country

and its glories, and in desperate abuse of her most gifted individuals. In the fourth canto of Childe Harold, he says,

“ Yet was I born where men are proud to be,—
Not without cause. And should I leave behind
The inviolate island of the sage and free,
And seek me out a home by a remoter sea,

Perhaps I loved it well; and should I lay
My ashes in a soil which is not mine,
My spirit shall resume it—if we may,
Unbodied, choose a sanctuary.”

How different is this from the hollow levity of Don Juan:—

“ I have no great cause to love that spot of earth,
Which held what might have been the noblest nation;
But though *I owe it little but my birth,*
I feel a mix’d regret and veneration
For its decaying fame and former worth.
Seven years (the usual term of transportation)
Of absence lay one’s old resentment level,
When a man’s country’s going to the devil.”

He has “no great cause to love that spot of earth.”—He, the inheritor of a splendid fortune and a lofty lineage!—He, the called by his rank and his talents to assert her honour and her freedom in his proper sphere!—He, that choosing to dedicate himself to more pleasurable pursuits, has been welcomed with a warmth and an indulgence that far greater poets and far better men have never realized!—He dare to justify his scorn of her glories, his corruption of her children, his prostitution of her language, by the erroneous self-deception that he owes her “little but his birth!”—There is but one word for such conduct, and his lordship is liberal of it—Renegade.

Again: Lord Byron burst from the obscurity of his drawing school-boy muse in a popular satire. The merits of his suppressed poem have, in our view, been greatly over-rated; but it had at least the faculty of distinguishing between bitterness and black-guardism. That his lordship has parted with this nice discrimination may, we think, be proved by a few passages from the late Don Juans. We feel real pain in their repetition:—

“ That long spout
Of blood and water, leaden Castlereagh.”
“ Carotid-artery cutting Castlereagh.”
“ Where’s little Castlereagh?—the devil can tell.”
“ Shuffling Southeby, that incarnate lie.”
“ Turncoat Southeby.”

We could select fifty instances of this species of wit and argument; but they would prove but one thing, which we are afraid has long since been fully proved—that Lord Byron has ceased to be a gentleman. The peer of the realm, who can descend, either in speech or in print, publicly or even privately to call the clerks of public offices, or any other fellow-men, the “least civil sons

of ——,” must be content to aspire to no society beyond the hero he has so felicitously described,—The footpad Tom,

“ With black-eyed Sal (his blowing,
So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing.”

The commonest acquaintance with human nature is sufficient to prove, that the mind cannot be brutified and vulgarized in a degree sufficient to produce the atrocities we have felt it our painful duty to notice, without a proportionate decrepitude of the intellectual power, with reference to its employment upon a work of art. As a poet, we conceive Lord Byron is *extinct*. To those who lean to a contrary opinion, we recommend the perusal of “ The Island;” a production which, for feebleness, obscurity, and tediousness, is, we think, unsurpassed by any of the myriads of prize poems which the innocent aspirants of our universities annually perpetrate. As our readers may require us to prove even these half negations, we take a passage at random:—

“ The devotee

Lives not in earth, but in his ecstasy;
Around him days and worlds are heedless driven,
His soul is gone before his dust to heaven.
Is love less potent? No;—his path is trod,
Alike uplifted gloriously to God;
Or linked to all we know of heaven below,
The other better self, where joy or wo
Is more than ours; the all-absorbing flame,
Which, kindled by another, grows the same,
Wrapt in one blaze; the pure, yet funeral pile,
Where gentle hearts, like Bramins, sit and smile.”

We only ask the reader to compare this jumble of images with the weakest passage in Childe Harold, to satisfy himself that “ the ways of heaven are equal;”—that brandy and opium must end in delirium;—that habitual indecency and profaneness must find their earthly retribution in a premature dotage.

We have applied ourselves to a delicate and an unpleasing task, with no predetermination to speak more harshly of Lord Byron than his extravagant departures from decency and from sense might demand. We have within us, and we say it most unaffectedly, that reverence for genius which compels us to approach it, even in its decay, as we would walk amidst the wreck of some grand or some lovely fabric, in whose former seats of happiness and beauty the night-bird and the reptile have made their resting-places. But we have spoken warmly of Lord Byron’s vices, because they are evidently not transient aberrations, but crimes upon principle. Lord Byron has determined to be the poet of *the mob*; and mistaking, as we most sincerely believe he does, the present temper, habits, and intelligence of the reading portion of the English people, as distinguished from the literati and the fashionable world, he has fancied that the food which the mechanics of London require, is outrageous abuse of persons in authority, undisguised contempt of the national creed, vulgarity in its most obtrusive

forms, and obscenity, daring and unmitigated as any that the midnight orgies of an overgrown metropolis might claim. We think he is mistaken in his belief of the present cravings of this large and most important portion of society; that his notions of the popular mind of England are transmitted through a dense and distorting medium of exclusive inquiries and low companionships.—But let him speak for himself;—

“I won’t reflect,—that is,
If I can stave off thought, which, as a whelp,
Clings to its teat—sticks to me through the abyss
Of this old labyrinth; or as the kelp
Holds by the rocks; or, as a lover’s kiss
Drains its first draught of lips: but, as I said,
I *won’t* philosophize, and *will* be read.”

Let Lord Byron reconsider this empty boast. There have been other idols of sensuality in the world before him,—but where are they? The fate of Dagon is the fate of all those who have attempted to build their *popularity* upon the corruptions of mankind:—

“Next came one
Who mourn’d in earnest, when the captive ark
Mai’m’d his brute image, head and hands lopt off
In his *own* temple, on the grunzel edge,
Where he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers.”

OBSERVATIONS

On the Poetry of Southey and Walter Scott.

[Extracted from the Christian Observer for June, 1810.]

THE rules of poetical composition, as of the other elegant arts, were first taught by the Greek writers ; and the models which their genius and industry supplied are so perfect, that both the ancient and modern world have, for the greater part, been content to acknowledge the authority, and copy the productions, of these masters. Yet it is observable that we are indebted for some most capital performances to a certain disregard of the dogmas of the old orthodox schools. Horace boasts that the style of his Satires was original ; and he might have claimed the same character for many of his lyrical pieces. In later days, Dante and Ariosto among the Italians ; Shakespeare, Milton, and Butler, among our own countrymen, unquestionably the greatest poetical geniuses of modern times, have shewn very little veneration for the classical authorities in the structure of their respective works. So that it is plain, however just be the principles delivered by the ancient sages, they are not so comprehensive as to include all the varieties of composition which genius may render seductive or commanding.

What has happened to the poetical commonwealth in general, seems to have recurred in most of its provincial subdivisions. Each nation has produced some authors who have become the classicks of their country, and for the most part given the law to their successors. The sphere, indeed, of their influence was necessarily limited ; for the principles of taste and truth in composition having long since been established, they could only revive in these things the lessons of older masters, and share, at the most, a portion of the power which they restored to them. But in the refinement of the national dialects, and in the construction of systems of versification suited to the genius of each language, original industry was to be exercised and standards fixed. In the more cultivated countries this has at different times been accomplished. Since the days of Petrarch and Dante, the Italians have written in the stanza which they employed. Malesherbes, Regnier, and Corneille taught their countrymen the use of the Alexandrian couplet, with rhymes in alternate gen-

ders ; and French poetry has ever since worn this fashionable but fantastick dress. Klopstock has but lately introduced the heroick hexameter among the Germans, but his skill and genius have already recommended it to pretty general adoption.

In our own language, Sidney tried the hexameter in vain. Spenser introduced the Italian stanza, but his followers have been few ; though one of the most beautiful of our poems* is written in that measure. Cowley was as capricious in the length and structure of his lines, as in the other parts of his compositions. Milton, at last, gave to the blank iambicks a dignity and sweetness of which no other form of verse had been proved to be susceptible ; and Dryden, Pope, and Tickell wrought the same measure in rhymed couplets to the most elaborate perfection. Since their days, our principal writers, partly from indolence, but principally from the splendid success and established reputation of these great masters, have submissively adopted the system of versification which they rendered popular ; and scarce an instance has occurred, till the present age, of any attempt to discover new melodies in our language, or to attract attention by compositions of a different nature from those which the classicks, ancient and modern, had left for imitation.

This age, however, has been an age of innovation in poetry, as in greater things ; and two writers have, within the last fifteen years, given to the publick compositions wholly unlike every thing which had preceded them, and stamped with the impress of true genius. Our readers will readily imagine that we allude to Mr. Southey and Mr. Scott.

Mr. Southey's Thalaba was perhaps the boldest experiment ever made in literature. He chose a tale of oriental origin, founded on the wildest legends of the Islam superstition. Sorcery and witchcraft had indeed long been known in verse ; but no man before ever conceived the design of forming a grave poem of twelve cantos entirely from such materials. Yet so great are the powers of true genius, that, to a subject thus essentially and hopelessly fictitious, has been communicated a dignity, an interest, and even an air of reality, which may be looked for in vain among the most celebrated of the regular compositions. There is a moral sublimity in the

* Thomson's Castle of Indolence.

fable worthy of Milton, and unequalled but by him. The colouring is, in the loftier parts, bold and great; in the milder scenes, unrivalled for luxuriance, softness, and harmony; uniting the taste of Claude with the wild picturesque magnificence of Salvator. The meter is even more original than the fable. The lines have no correspondence by rhyme, and are subjected to no law, except that two shall never be used in sequence that can be read in one. With this limitation, they vary in length, and in the adjustment of the cadences, as the taste or judgment of the poet prescribed. We do not say that the versification of Thalaba is never feeble; but we venture to affirm, that it possesses, on the whole, more varied melody than any blank verse in the language, except Milton's; and it is quite free from that formal air, which must always belong, more or less, to a system of rhymed couplets. We extract two passages in justification of this opinion: they are rather favourable specimens, but we think them almost unrivalled for metrical effect.

“ Far over the plain,
Away went the brideless steed;
With the dew of the morning his fetlocks were wet,
And the foam frothed his limbs in the journey of noon,
Nor stayed he till over the westerly heaven
The shadows of evening had spread.”

Lib. ii. 5.

“ And then upon the beach he laid him down,
And watched the rising tide.
He did not pray; he was not calm for prayer;
His spirit, troubled with tumultuous hope,
Toiled with futurity;
His brain, with busier workings, felt
The roar and raving of the restless sea,
The boundless waves that rose and roll'd and rock'd;
The everlasting sound
Oppress'd him, and the heaving infinite;
He closed his eyes for rest.”

Lib. ii. 259.

This poem, though greatly admired by refined judges, has never acquired the full share of popularity it deserved. The faults of the work, which are in the same scale with its excellencies, partly account for this. Yet, on the whole, we ven-

ture to express a decided opinion, that, bold as was the experiment, Mr. Southey's success fully justified his temerity ;

—*si voce Metelli*

Serventur leges mallent a Cæsare tolli.

Thalaba had not been many years before the publick, when a poem appeared, quite as original, and almost equally eccentric, but unlike its precursor in every other particular. The Lay of the Last Minstrel seized the general attention at once, and has ever since enjoyed a larger share of popularity than has been bestowed on any other composition in verse for near a century. It is curious to consider the causes which contributed to secure it so flattering a reception.

We have no disposition to undervalue the powers of Mr. Scott's genius, but undoubtedly he owed much to the state of the poetical commonwealth at the time of his appearance. People had for some time become perfectly hopeless of the regular poets ; scarcely a single versifier of the old school (Cowper excepted) having appeared, for forty years, whose performances were above mediocrity. From this censure we do not entirely exclude even Gray, or Mason, though both are occasionally great. Gray's short effusions are painfully elaborate ; and Mason's most studied pieces are still imperfect. Churchill and his followers deserve a sharper censure ; and the rest are with difficulty remembered—The degraded state of the establishment naturally encouraged sectarianism. Darwin tried a new school in poetry, not unlike the Venetian academy among the painters. His colouring was in the highest degree brilliant, his language rich, and his cadences beautifully harmonious ; but truth, nature, and simplicity were wanting ; and the meteor his genius kindled, after playing awhile with bright and varied coruscations, disappeared at once. In another quarter arose a poetical fraternity, too much favoured by Mr. Southey in his earlier writings, who claimed to be the genuine pupils of nature, and, abhorring all factitious elegance, professed to recommend themselves, by a perfect simplicity ;—forgetting that simplicity is in itself but neutral ; a sort of pure atmosphere, which only assists the effect of beautiful objects by exhibiting them very perfectly. Their simplicity, too, was artificial and affected. Yet, such was the craving of the publick for something original, that this whim-

sical race were for a time very popular ; and might, perhaps, have continued to be so, if they had not been fairly whipped off the stage by our old friends and enemies, the Edinburgh Reviewers. Even the Della-Cruscans strutted their hour in triumph ; and it is difficult to guess what new anticks might have been practised in poetry, had the theatre still remained open, and the publick appetite unsatisfied. At this fortunate conjuncture the Lay of the last Minstrel appeared.

Mr. Scott had been previously known as the editor of a very miscellaneous collection of old ballads, among which he inserted some minstrelsy of his own, much superior to the best of them. There are passages in Glenfinlass equal to anything which he has ever written ; and the Eve of St. John is undoubtedly the finest tale of terror in the language. But the Lay aspired to praise of a much higher kind. The subject was chosen from among the legends of border chivalry ; and though little skill is shewn, or perhaps intended to be exercised, in the construction of the fable, several circumstances conspired to give it a peculiar interest. In the first place, it was antique ; and possessed in that character the same sort of charm which belongs to a mouldering edifice, once the seat of grandeur or superstition ;—a charm of which we are all sensible, though few are at the pains to analyze it. Then, the story is chivalrous ; and chivalry gave birth to a state of manners unquestionably the most picturesque that ever has existed. We do not, however, agree that the border feuds are particularly susceptible of poetical embellishment :* on the contrary, we think that the savage marauders on the frontiers are as much inferior in romance as in real life to the polished cavaliers of the court of Elizabeth,—the Sidneys, Essexes, and Raleighs of that brilliant era. Rudeness, surely, is never poetical, though an excellent poet may be sometimes rude. But the happiest circumstance in the construction of this poem, and that which, among the mechanical parts, contributed most to its success, certainly was the introduction of the Minstrel, by which the freedom of the old romance was easily and naturally united with the refinement of modern art. He who copied the Troubadours was sure to be entertaining ; for their only business was to amuse, and few fail in that which it is their first interest to understand. When to this were united the delightful associations and cultivated diction

* See the introduction to the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

which have been the fruit of modern industry, the result could not but be admirable. It is, in truth, exactly that which is acknowledged to be the most fascinating in manners,—a refined simplicity ; a polished ease ; nature well-dressed, but not incumbered by her trappings.

In addition to all this, Mr. Scott, perhaps in imitation of Thalaba, but more probably from that honest confidence which belongs to real genius, adopted a system of versification entirely new and exceedingly well suited to the style of his composition. It is surprising that something of this kind was not earlier attempted. With all the deference due to the great masters who fixed our standard metres, it surely is true that iambicks repeated without variation are apt to drag heavily in a long poem. Our verses are a little like ourselves, stately and respectable, but rather dreary, and altogether exceedingly uninviting. They chime on, like the musick to our ordinary ballads and psalmody, which still runs the same drone through fifty stanzas, with the sense perhaps varying in each of them. A modern French writer of great genius says, that the English have taken the images for their poetry from the colour of their clouds, and the cadence of their verse from the roaring of the ocean. There is much truth in this ; and though the force and genius of a writer may enable him to overcome these obstacles, it cannot be unwise to escape them ; at least where the lightness of the subject allows, and even seems to require it. Mr. Scott has done this very successfully. If any one is startled at the innovation, let him consider what the Lay of the Last Minstrel would be in the metre of Milton, or drilled into the regular ten-syllable couplets. It would be about as fine as the Paradise Lost turned into the stanza of Chevy Chace.*

* An ingenious gentleman, who was dissatisfied with Milton's manner of versifying, once on a time actually versified anew the whole of that noble poem. Farmer has given the following precious specimen of his taste.

Meantime, the setting sun
Slowly descended, and with right aspect
Levelled his evening rays.

Old version.

Meantime the setting sun, descending slow,
Levelled with aspect right his evening rays.

New version.

However, we must not be understood to approve absolutely, and without exception, of the versification of the Lay : on the contrary, we think it much too capriciously irregular. Mr. Southey, who rejected rhyme (an appendage which no one will wish to retain, if it may with safety be dismissed,) is obliged to seek a compensation for this disadvantage in a continual variation of his cadence :—but those who have rhyme should have reason too, and not vary the length of their lines without an obvious necessity or expedience. The eight-syllable verse is that which Mr. Scott ordinarily uses ;—a measure in which Dryden says a poet has not room to turn himself round, but which, though too short for the sententious, dialectick style of that great master, is very well adapted to the rapid action of a modern romance.

The original versification of the Lay certainly contributed greatly to its effect : and so, we are afraid, did the capricious variety of its metres, for variety is very fascinating. The same is probably true of some other of its peculiarities ; as, the antiquarianism and minute details of dress and costume, which are at the best of very questionable merit, but which were engaging at first from their novelty. Yet, after all, the causes of the popularity of the Lay are principally to be sought in the genius of its author. The beautiful lines which commence and conclude the poem ; almost the whole of the second canto ; the fine descriptions of morning and evening, heightened by the contrast of the preceding scenes ; the exquisitely tender lines which close the third and open the fourth canto ; the spirited introduction of the sixth ; the march of the English forces ; the portraiture of Howard ; the delightful ballads of Fitztraver and Harold, with the descriptions of the two poets : these are passages which might well recommend any poem to the publick favour, without asking aid from peculiarities in the style or fable. These are gems that will give a value to the curious setting that encases them, long after its fanciful and delicate workmanship has ceased to be admired.

Success alarms the timid, and makes bolder spirits confident. Had Mr. Scott distrusted his powers too much, he would probably have written no more ; distrusting them rather too little, he published Marmion ; certainly the most daring contempt of the court of publick opinion that ever has been committed. This work, like the Lay, is formed upon

the model of the old romance ; and in such a composition the fable is of prime importance. To say, that in Marmion it is imperfect, or awkwardly constructed, would be an injustice to the author : there is none,—literally none. The whole action of the poem consists in the journey of a noble lord from Northumberland to Edinburgh and back again. The histories of Constance and Clara, which were intended for the plot, are episodical ; and the battle of Flodden Field, which occupies nearly the whole of the last canto, and gives a name to the work, has about as much connection with the principal narrative as the battle of Marathon. For the characters, the account of them is like that of our old races ; “ Eclipse first, and all the others no where.” Marmion is finely drawn, but he has neither equal nor second. Constance is a bad woman, with very strong passions ; Clara is a good one, with none at all ; De Wilton only stalks and groans ; and the rest are mere shadows. A third part of the poem is filled with processions and such mummary, the tedious tales of Mine Host and Sir David Lindesay, and the still more stupid narratives of the Prioress and De Wilton. Then, for fear of wanting letter-press, half a dozen things are thrown in, that are called Introductions ; which, like dedications in blank, have just this merit, that they will suit all persons and all poems equally well. Add to this, that what is good in Marmion is all of the same character,—severe and lofty ; addressed only to the highest faculties of the understanding. Nothing is sacrificed to the graces. The poem contains scarcely a single passage of refinement or tenderness : the writer never studies to delight the taste or interest the feelings.

Yet, with all these faults, and they are unpardonably great and numerous, Marmion is without doubt a very extraordinary production. It is full of defective passages ; but whatever is not bad, is excellent ; so excellent, that nothing in the Lay can be set in competition with it. For a long time the genius of the writer seems struggling with a cloud, and the light is faint and fitful ; but towards the close of the fourth canto it breaks forth with considerable lustre, shines with a pleasing brilliancy through the earlier part of the fifth, and in the sixth bursts out with such astonishing splendour, that all the faults and all the merits of the preceding parts are thrown into the shade. The versification of Marmion is superior to that of the Lay ; more free, full, and flowing ; and less irregu-

lar. In the description of the battle there is a wildness and confusion, which remind one of the bold attempt by Julio Romano, in his Battle of Constantine, to imitate the bustle and tumult of the scene, by scattering his figures and confounding the masses of light and shade. But the poet has been more successful than the painter.—We may here observe, in passing, that the principles on which metre in poetry should be made to assist the sense, seem hardly yet generally understood. Where this is seriously attempted, it ordinarily fails, though the taste and feeling of our best writers often reach it accidentally. The truth is, there should always be a correspondence between the sound and sense, but never an echo: just as in musick, where the influence of sound is more completely felt, a good master chooses both his principal keys, and those into which he modulates, with reference to the subject; but he does not mimick the separate tones of joy, and pain, and peace. Compare a chorus in the Messiah with the celebrated air in Acis and Galatea: the effect is admirable in both; but it is a general effect; not a particular imitation, like the notes of a mock-bird. Yet even Handel, like Pope and Cowley, sometimes forgets the limits of his art, and attempts to scatter his notes, like the sheep upon the mountain. This is punning.

The reception of Marmion was by no means very flattering to its author. Expectation, indeed, had been raised so high, that it could hardly have been satisfied with any thing; and while every body saw the faults of the poem, and felt its deficiencies, few could estimate its merits. The ladies, particularly, whose praises had contributed greatly to Mr. Scott's success, and probably not a little to his idleness, now began to murmur against their knight, and complained of the total want of interest in the new poem; for his antique sketches had lost their novelty, and there was little of genuine nature to supply the vacancy. Some people began to talk of the whole as an imposture; and many, who were persuaded that they had not been deluded into their admiration of the Lay, expressed a fear that the reign of their favourite was over. Mr. Scott at the same time received some very severe, but salutary, discipline from the Edinburgh Reviewers, who mingled high applause with just and well-directed censures.

FOLIAGE; OR, POEMS ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED.

Hunt, Leigh

The Atheneum; or, Spirit of the English Magazines (1817-1833); Jun 15, 1818; 3, 6;

American Periodicals

pg. 201

From the Literary Gazette, April 1818.

FOLIAGE ; OR, POEMS ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED.

BY LEIGH HUNT.

THE phrase "School of Poetry," like the phrase "School of Painting," has of late come much into vogue. Every person who departs from the received canons in either art, is said, pleasantly enough, to be the founder of a school, and all his fellow rhymesters to "belong to this school :" which in the latter case is not so far amiss, since truly they more resemble young learners than mature teachers ; and so, to confess the fact, generally do their ringleaders ;

- - - - - fellows

In foleap uniforms turned up with ink,
So very anxious, clever, fine and jealous,

One don't know what to say to them, or think,
Unless to puff them with a pair of bellows.*

As we are not disposed to any kind of puffing, we would hint, that the substitution of the word *fashion* for the word *school*, in these affairs, seems desirable. Schools are, or ought to be, grave places, where wisdom is acquired ; but Fashion admits of as many follies and fripperies as you please, the last being invariably the best, the newest the most enchanting. Cottage bonnets and insipid pastorals, hussar cloaks and martial odes, lace tippets and sonnets, long skirts and romantic tales, turbans and Eastern poems, costume à la Greque and Epics,

may then be alternately and equally the rage for a month, and no great harm ensue :—we will allow the absurdity in verse, and the absurdity in dress, a like duration ; the former to be laughed at over the tea-tables for four long weeks, and the latter to remain unrivalled on the frontispiece of any of the fashionable magazines, till the first day of the month ensuing that of its appearance ; but it is too much to christen such things by names which give an idea of perpetuity, and we, once for all, protest against the appellation of School, whether given to the watery, cockney, be-natural, or sentimental Bards of these times, when rhyme is so plentiful, that we suspect it will soon be a difficult matter to produce even a business letter written in plain prose. If the cacoethes continue, there will shortly be no novelty in the rhyming cobbler of Gosport, who sent a lady's shoes home with the following billet,

Your humble poet, Madam, and the Muses,
Presents your La'ship with this pair of shoes-es.

We are free to confess that we do not belong to that class which considers the style of writing adopted by the author before us, and others his coadjutors, as admirable poetry. Mr. Hunt appears to be, in domestic matters, an amiable man ; he is fond of his wife, and his children, and his friends, and of Hampstead, and of trees, especially when leafy, and of

* *Belpo*. We have the best reasons for believing that this new poem is the production of Lord Byron. What wonderful versatility of genius !

rural walks, and of tea in his parlour. Now this is all very becoming, and very harmless ; but, to persons not so fond of Mrs. Hunt, nor of Johnny Hunt, aged four years, alias

— little ranting Johnny,
For ever blithe and bonny,
And singing nonny, nonny, &c.

nor of Hampstead, with

A steeple issuing from a leafy rise
With farmy front —————
———— with heath and pond,
Nature's own ground ; woods that let mansions
through !

nor of any other of the author's haunts and recreations,—we say, that those not so partial to these things as Mr. Hunt, must find his songs and sonnets about them, though they may be tolerable enough to his private circle, very unentertaining and tiresome. For ourselves, we candidly own that we think them monstrously insipid. Their model seems to be the meanest of the Italian sonneteers, whose everlasting aim at some prettiness or other was sometimes rewarded with a hit, but, like Gratiano's reasons, when the object is attained, it is not Byron, Moore, and Wordsworth, worth the fatigue of arriving at it.

True poetry opens a nobler pursuit than this squirrel-hunting among bushes. The race of creation is within its grasp—of all ages and nations, as a sample of the sublime and the immense, the exquisite touch, and the minute of nature, are indeed alike in its elements ; but its soul

seizes them all as if by supernatural power, and does not go creeping and twining after little things, hugging poor conceits, and revelling on the luxuries of a single and leafy luxury of antient imagination thought, when any shape of an

original idea happily glances across its path. Many of our modern writers seem to imagine that poetic genius consists in the fanciful illustration of the most

trite objects ; that to call a tree leafy, and a bird hoppy, and a cat purry, is genuine nature ; that to speak of brutes having “lamping eyes,” (p. 13 of this vol.) of rills among stones having “little whiffling tones” (p. 15,) of “sleek seas” (p. 20,) and similar fooleries, is pure unadulterated inspiration, and not silly nonsense. They may be right : we are sceptics.

But to proceed somewhat more methodically with Mr. Leigh Hunt's volume, which we the rather treat unceremoniously, because he has the pen in his hand,

and the means of publicly refuting any misrepresentation (advantages which few writers possess,) we have to state, that it consists of a dedication and preface, a principal poem in two parts, entitled ‘The Nymphs,’ six or eight short miscellaneous compositions, as many Epistles, twice as many Sonnets, and some translations from Homer, Theocritus, Catullus, and other ancient bards.

The preface displays a little pardonable egotism and vanity. Mr. Hunt explains what he considers to be the properties of poetry, viz. “a sensativeness to the beauty of the external world, to the unsophisticated impulses of our nature, and above all, imagination, or the power to see, with verisimilitude, what others do not”—and, quoth he, with much simplicity, “This is a secret which I saw very early : and I attribute to the knowledge of it whatever popularity I may have obtained, whether in verse or prose.” He then mentions the three living poets whom he chuses to rank with himself in this meritorious discovery—Byron, Moore, and Wordsworth. The rest of this preface is not very remarkable.

True poetry opens a nobler pursuit than this squirrel-hunting among bushes. The race of creation is within its grasp—of all ages and nations, as a sample of the sublime and the immense, the exquisite touch, and the minute of nature, are indeed alike in its elements ; but its soul Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, seizes them all as if by supernatural power, evidently sparkled up, and had their, and does not go creeping and twining after little things, hugging poor conceits, whenever they turned to the fair form and revelling on the luxuries of a single and leafy luxury of antient imagination thought, when any shape of an

Not pretending to understand all this, we pass to what, from the shape of the lines and other indications, we take

THE NYMPHS is a sort of poetic vision, in which all the tribes which the Classical Dictionary mentioneth, are seen and described by the author in a woody walk. The minuteness is so task-like that, were we not sure the Rape of the Lock was itself a burlesque, we should have taken this as a burlesque, performed as a given exercise, on Pope's Gnomes and Sylphs. We have the Dryads, Ha-

madryads, Napeads, Limniads, Oreades, Ephydriads, Naiads, Nereids, &c. all as large as life, doing, bona fide before Mr.

Hunt's eyes, the business which the old even of their round nor square murmurs mythological writers in their various fancies assigned them.

There are the fair nymphs o' the woods, (Look ye,
Whom kindred Fancies have brought after me !)
There are the fair-limbed Dryads - - -

part of whose duty it is to teach the mother blackbird to lead astray the foolish boy

When he would steal the huddled nest away.

And next,

Then, there the hamadriads are, their sisters,
Simpler Crown twisters, - - -

As for the *Napeads*, whom we expected to find at St. Helena, the guardian angels of poor *Nap*, they have the care of fresh flowers from the spoil

Of beasts, and blasts, and other blind mishaps
For little children's laps—

Of the Limniads little is told us, but as they take 'their pleasure in the lakes' we suppose Mr. Hunt thought it polite not to trespass on the property of the *Lake Poets*. The Oreads 'frequent the listed mountains,' and never was the adage more applicable than to their picture—Parturium montes, nascetur ridiculus mus,—for some of them

- - go leaping by the laughing fountains
Down the touched crags - - -

and others

Sit perfumed underneath the cedar shades
Feeding the gazel with his lamping eyes.

The charge of the Ephydriads is not very clearly defined. They haunt islands in such situations as is laid down in the underwritten, and which baffles our topographical skill,

- - - there, where a gap
Betwixt a heap of tree-tops, hollow and dun,
Shews where the waters run,
And whence the fountain's tongue begin to lap
There lie they, lulled by little whistling tones
Of rills among the stones,
Or by the rounder murmur, glib and flush
Of the escaping gush
That laughs and tumbles, like a conscious thing,
For joy of all its future travelling.

Lord help us ! But really this seems to us to be sheer raving, and we know not what to make of hollow and dun tree-tops shewing where waters run, nor of the tongues of fountains beginning to lap like a litter of puppies, nor of little or great whistling tones of streamlets, nor

however glib and flush, nor, verily, of their laughing, (crying is more aqueous) nor tumbling, nor consciousness, nor future tours. The whole is a rhapsody, and so it proceeds

The lizard circuits them—(i. e. the Ephydriads)
- - - - - and his grave will
The frog, with reckoning leap, enjoys apart
Till now and then the woodcock frights his heart
And all is woody, mossy, and watery.

The last line is an entirely new species of rhythm: a whole poem in it would be extremely curious ! We are afraid we must fatigue our readers with these selections, but we shall dismiss the other nymphs briefly. The Naiads are well known, and the only new trait in their character discovered by the author is that they lure the swans on, which, following them,—

- - - - - glide
With unsuperfluous lift of their proud wings.

The Nereids are painted in a better manner, but still very affectedly, as

- - - - - lifting ocean's billows,
Making them banks and pillows,
Upon whose springiness they lean and ride :
Some with an inward back, some upward-eyed
Feeling the sky, and some with sidelong hips
O'er which the surface of the water slips.

They fly from the 'windy voices' of the clouds, and

Most they love sleek seas and springy sands.

It is not to be imagined that there are not beauties scattered among these deformities, which are taken from the first part alone. The general conception of the subject is poetical, although pursued into ramifications which destroy its effect, and treated, as we think these extracts will prove, in a strangely conceited manner. What, for instance, can be more fantastical than this idea of the guardians of the shady groves,—

Ethereal human shapes, perhaps the souls
Of poets and poetic women, staying
To have their fill of pipes and leafy playing--

And their companions the nymphs, who are assured,

This hum in air, which the still ear perceives
Is your unquarrelling voice among the leaves ;
And now I find, whose are the laughs and stirrings
To make the delicate birds dart so in whiskers and whirrings.

How very different is the following sweet natural sketch of the

fragrant living-bee
So happy, that he will not move, not he
Without a song—

Or the well imagined time

When morning runs along the sea
In a gold path—

But indeed the entire opening of the second part displays poetical powers not easily to be reconciled with the puerility of the general tone, nor even with the quaint language which deforms them.

As I thought this, a neighbouring wood of elms
Was moved, and stirred and whispered loftily,
Much like a pomp of warriors with plumed helms,
When some great general whom they long to see
Is heard behind them

And on the place
There fell a shade as on an awe-struck face ;
And overhead, like a portentous rim
Pulled over the wide world, to make all dim,
A grave gigantic cloud came hugely uplifting him.
It passed with a slow shadow ; and I saw
Where it went down beyond me on the plain,
Sloping its dusky ladders of thick rain ;
And on the mist it made, and blinding awe,
The sun, re-issuing in the opposite sky,
Struck the all-coloured arch of his great eye :
And up, the rest o' the country laughed again :
The leaves were amber ; the sunshine
Scored on the ground its conquering line ;
And the quick birds, for scorn of the great cloud,
Like children after fear, were merry and loud.

We have here extracted what in our opinion is infinitely the best passage in the poem, which is given to the description of a crowd of aerial figures sailing on the clouds, and ultimately descending in a circle, and kissing the eyes of the poet. Of the far-fetched nature of this description a few lines will afford a sufficient notion,

Most exquisite it was indeed to see
How these blithe damsels guided variously
Before, behind, beside

Another only shewed
On the far side a foot and leg, that glowed
Under the cloud ; a sweeping back another,
Turning her from us like a suckling mother ;
She next, aside, lifting her arms to tie
Her locks into a flowing knot ; and she
That followed her, a smooth down-arching thigh
Tapering with tremulous mass internally.

Here we are again gravelled, and our anatomical knowledge fails us as completely as our topographical. We shall conclude with one specimen more, which in

ten lines comprehends nearly all the absurdities of Mr. Hunt's muse, being at once senseless in epithets, confused in metaphor, affected in style, nonsensical where intelligible, and incomprehensible in its other figures, similes, and elucidations.

And more remain ; (such things are in Heaven's ears
Besides the grander spheres) :

For as the racks came sleeking on, one fell
W^rh rain into a dell,
Breaking with scatter of a thousand notes
Like twangling pearls ; and I perceived how she
Who loosed it with her hands, press'd kneadingly,
As though it had been wine, in *grap*y coals ;
And out it gushed, with that enchanting sound
In a wet shadow to the ground.

Were Mr. Hunt to exclaim with Lord Peter, ‘he that does not understand let him die and be d—d,’ we must bear the full brunt of the curse, for to us this whole passage is utterly inexplicable.

We pass over the Miscellanies, which are very indifferent pieces, with all their ‘fine-eyed,’ ‘pure-eyed,’ ‘far-eyed,’ and every kind but gimlet-eyed phraseology ; and merely notice the Epistles, to say that they are addressed to ‘Dear Byron’ (My Lord), ‘Dear Tom’ (Moore), ‘Dear Hazlit,’ and ‘Dear Field,’ and other friends of the writer’s. They attempt to be easy and facetious, but will not bear analysis either for wit or versification. *E.c. gr.* in one to ‘Charles Lamb : the following is the most humorous passage,

But now Charles, you never (so blissful you deem me)
Come lounging with twirl of umbrella to see me.
In vain have we hoped to be set at our ease
By the rains, which you know used to bring Lamb and
pease ;
In vain we look out like the children in Thomson,
And say, in our innocence, “Surely he'll come soon.”

The sonnets are queer things. One of them to Henry Robertson and John Gattie begins thus,

Harry, my friend, who full of tasteful glee,
Have music *all about you*, heart and lips ;
And, John, whose voice is like a rill that slips
Over the sunny pebbles breathingly—

Harry may be a barrel-organ, but what John Gattie’s gurgling voice resembles defeats our imaginative faculty.

There only remain the Translations to notice. As themes in the second or third form they might merit praise, but they are little calculated to add a value even to this publication. We wonder that

when the title of ‘*Foliage*’ was so prettily assumed in imitation of the German ‘*Leaves*,’ and when the paltiy conceit was prolonged by naming these productions ‘*Evergreens*,’ it was not rendered still more puerile by adding instead of translated, ‘*transplanted* from the antient

poets.’ There is much of silliness in such doings, and we trust when the author’s brain exfoliates in its next spring, he will give us less of his new-fangled ‘blos-somings’ and more of old-fashioned fruit. As it is, his nymphs are not of the Hesperides.

POEMS: Communicated for the Galaxy

Walter, William B.

The New - England Galaxy and United States Literary Advertiser (1830-1836); Nov 30, 1821; 4, 216;

American Periodicals

pg. 237

Communicated for the Galaxy. POEMS.

BY WILLIAM B. WALTER.

If the exuberance of the press may be assumed as the measure of intellectual fertility, surely the minds of our countrymen have been most unjustly accused of barrenness. Time was, when a man of moderate industry might keep tolerably even pace with the press, and attend with scrupulous punctuality to his other avocations ; but that time has past *lang syne* ; and it is now no ordinary labour to peruse even the quarterly list of new publications. The printers' devils have lately drawn on their seven leagued boots, and 'Catch us, who can,' would be an apposite motto for these children of Faust. For our own part, we have long since given up the attempt, and content ourselves with reading any publication, not older than the present century, which happens to be thrown in our way, without a minute examination of its inspiration. It must be acknowledged, however, that we did not treat the volume before us quite so cavalierly, having anxiously anticipated its birth ever since the appearance of its forewarning "Literary Notice." What must have been our pleasure, then, when, looking into Callender's a few days since, our eyes were greeted with the pleasant sight of a very fashionable volume, bound, à-la-Dandie, lying upon the counter, and courting our attention by the elegance of its costume. We raised the cover and found to our inexpressible satisfaction,—not a refugee from the devouring flames of the baker's oven,—a fugitive from the "Fights of Faith,"—but a collection of miscellaneous poems, by our old acquaintance, the author of *Skeeky*. We lost no time in making it our own ; and it was not long ere we were comfortably seated before a roaring fire, with the folding knife in one hand, and its royal octavo pages expanded before us in the other, devouring its contents.

We found it replete with the characteristic faults of the author, obscurity, and redundancy of epithet ; still, we were not disappointed ; there runs throughout the volume a fervency of genius, which requires only a disciplining, shotastic and severe, to render it one day a bright gem in the literary coronet of its country.

The first and longest poem in the work, entitled "Romance," is, apparently, not a little labored, but it contains some fine things, ad. though there are many obscure passages, many unmeaning epithets, still, there is a sufficiency of redeeming beauties to "smooth the even brow of criticism till it smiles." We will instance the description of the war of elements, which succeeded the mournful and heart-rending tragedy of Calvary, as one of the fine things of the poem, but it is too long for a quotation in so brief a notice, and we prefer rather to recommend the volume by a few shorter extracts. We select the following lines from a brief sketch of the first crusade, as an instance of high strung thought, happily embodied.

"Saw ye no flash of the scymitar's wave,
As it fell on the crests of the warrior brave ?—
The crimson plume mingling with crescent of light ;—
The struggles of death in the heat of the fight !
Where the wild war horse trampled over the dead
And crushed out the souls of the living,—and died ?
His fetlocks all gory, and ghastly his eye !—
And the groan and the curse, and the horrible yell
Of the victor and vanquished, like spirits of hell
From their chains unbound and wailing high,
Striking out the long curse of their agony !"

As a contrast to the above we will place before the reader a moral picture.

"Enough of death's mad struggles ! vainly told
To move the passions of the desperate bold !—
Strange that the mind should love the maniac play
Of war's proud pomp, that lasts but for a day !
Still charmed with visions which allure in youth,
Man wakes too late to learn the living truth,
That all is evil, and he wakes in vain !—
But war has wo that gives no throb of pain
Or suffering to the heart that feeds on show !—
Bright crested helms, the gaudy banners flow—
Lip-purple robes and knighthood's glittering star,
The deep delirious harmonies of war,—
Gay flowing plumes, and gold embroidery,
Are pageant shows, contrived to catch the eye !—
Unroll Ambition's volume, turn the page,
The history learn of each eventful age !
In characters of blood each lesson traced
Of all the brave have done, the bad effaced ;
Fame's finger points to annals that may last,
And give us power to ponder on the past !—
Sceptred and slave, know each their separate play,
The one must govern and the rest obey ;
All splendid dreamers of a summer's day,
Exult, or crouch, as suits the form of sway !"

We extract a few verses from the description of the Fairy Land, as a proof of the creative fancy of the author.

"Sometimes we wander to the Fairy Land,
Where the soul dances and her wings expand !
Fair Land !—all brightened o'er with turf and flowers,
And dewy shrubbery, and moonlight bowers,
Retreat of Fancy's glittering vagrant powers.
Fair Heaven !—where many coloured clouds enfold,
Bright islets floating in the sea of gold !
Proud domes and palaces are shining there,
With ivory columns, gemmed with fire-stained spar !—
There wanton Zephyrs dance on budding flowers,
And wast the fragrant leaves in snowy showers ;—
By sunny banks, the silver waters whirl
A wildering musick o'er their sands of pearl !"

The conclusion of the poem displays a sickly affectation of melancholy, which did not please us, for we could not persuade ourselves of its reality—indeed it seemed but a puerile

imitation of the eccentricities of a great poet of the present day, and, therefore, ought studiously to have been avoided.

We will extract but one short passage in confirmation of our assertion.

"These were the dreams that cheer'd my earlier day—
All now are vanished, and their phantoms play
Deceive the mind no more.—I walk alone !—
The world has known me not, and the soft tone
Of Friendship's voice not mine to bear ;—and now
If it should breathe upon the ear its woe,
It would seem strange, and thrill upon the brain,
Like a wild shriek—the last of years of pain !"

From the "Death Chamber," the second poem in the volume, we have selected the concluding lines as a fair specimen of the beauty of the whole.

"Oh ! 'twas a sight—but all have seen that sight
A dream of sorrow and of strange delight !—
Yes ! there was something in that farewell hour
That proved the pride of mind, its hope and power.
'Twas not the dreadful and uncertain chill,
The horrid fear, that startles, and is still ;
The fear, that tells the soul it soon must cease
(A tale of wo and doubt, but none of peace,)
To be, and mingle with the wakeless dead
In the dark : lumbens of a darker bed !
Oh, no ! her's was the light and life of heaven—
Redeeming grace and love and sins forgiven ;
Of better worlds than this, unchanging, fair,
Where the glad spirit floats on wings of air,
Sweeping the harp of God, in softest tone,
In praise of Him, who sits upon the throne !"

The "Mourner of the Last Hope" is a beautiful little poem, and reminded us very strongly of the touching wildness and pathos of Coleridge. We shall, however, select but one stanza, and that only for the purpose of pointing out what appears to us a false epithet.

"Oh, Christ ! 'tis a strange and a fearful thought,
That beauty like her's should have perished ;
That the red lean worm
Should prey on a form,
Which a bosom of love might have cherished."

We remember, not long since, to have seen that humiliating, and, to man, pride-humbling object—a mouldering corse ; the flesh was but partially decayed, and the worm revelled upon the once proud tabernacle of a soul. It was a sight, which Schiller, or Maturin, might have envied us—that Byron, in an hour of gloomy sadness, might have described. We would that the author of these poems had been with us when we descended into the tomb, for, surely, if he had ever witnessed such a spectacle, he would have painted it more accurately. He might there have seen countless thousands of the soft, pale, writhing, writhing worm.

We pass over several beautiful poems to copy entire the very short one entitled "Reflection," which, if we remember right, once adorned the pages of the Port Folio.

"I've seen the dark ship proudly braving,
With high sail set and streamers waving,
The storm and fight, in glorious pride !—

I've seen those splendid streamers shrinking,
The high sail rent, the dark ship sinking
Beneath old Ocean's tide !

And heard the seaman farewell sighing,
His body on the wild waves lying,
His death prayer to the wind !

But sadder sight the eye may know,
Than proud ship lost or seaman's wo ;
Than battle fire or tempest cloud,
Or prey bird's shriek and ocean's shroud —

THE SHIPWRECK OF THE MIND !"

The "Specimens from Horace," though not strictly literal translations, are, still, sufficiently close to the spirit of the original, which the author has very happily transfused into his English version.

We hope sufficient has been said to induce the reader to purchase the volume and judge for himself of the merits of the author. In extenuation of his occasional obscurity, we can only express our belief, that there are times when a poet, of a vigorous and fertile imagination, may have a perfect and distinct impression painted to his mind's eye, and yet destroy the evanescent image of his fancy, in the attempt to embody it. The keen eye of the hypercritic may discover many faults, which it would be easy to marshal into formidable array against the reputation of the writer ; but to such, we can only say, in the language of the shepherd of Ettrick,

"Beware, friend, how thou kindlest such a flame,
To sear a soul and genius in the bloom."

T. O.

such now; but, perhaps, it will hardly satisfy the sort of appetite which distinguishes the present period; and, probably, what is now the most extolled, will hereafter excite little admiration. A few standard works of rare *intellectual* and *poetic* excellence, may prove exceptions to these remarks; but of these even, I apprehend that those only which embody utility, and include the concerns of both worlds, may be expected to survive the mutability of human affairs. One book, and one only, unites the qualities of antiquity and admiration, viz. the Bible, and this will continue to gather freshness and impart delight for ever. All other writings are evidently prone to disuse, and destined to oblivion, and with more or less swiftness, as they are more or less imbued with the spirit of that holy book.

Milton may outlive the "wreck of matter," and Watts, and Cowper, and Montgomery, and whosoever else has consecrated his muse to heaven, by making the morals of time those of eternity; while Pope, with his impurities, and especially such writers as Byron, with all their syren melodies, will go down to undisturbed oblivion.

There is a something, I hardly know what, in good poetry, that is very catching and impressive. One can more readily feel than describe what it is. But, may we love and praise good poetry, merely? Ought not the circumstance of its powerful influence on our feelings to put us the more on our guard against the dereliction of sentiment which it may contain, or the deleterious influence which it may impart? Poetry has a strong affinity to music in its effects on our feelings, and every one knows what a powerful lever music is, in moving the human passions.

We are frequently called to read, and are expected to admire a poetic effusion, merely for its *poetic* excellence, as if this ought to hide moral deformity, or can atone for moral corruption. Is the assassin the less murderous, because of the *splendid* dress which he may happen to wear, or the stab the less fatal because of the keenness of the poinard, or the adroitness of the blow?

There is poetry, which, *as such*, is excellent; but what is it beyond this, when the sentiment and its tendency is fairly considered? What are Lord Byron's writings, so fashionable to admire, and so tasteless to dislike, when these are taken into the view? As a much indulged child, once thwarted in his unreasonable desires, too often requites parental kindness with sullen ingratitude and disrespect, so this noble poet, because he could not possess *all* heaven's gifts, or because he was required to partake of the evils incident to humanity, seems to have turned from his Benefactor in disgust, and to have waged a war of the heart against him. Such seems to be the spirit of his writings. His muse is mute in *divine song*. It is heard only in repinings at his allotment, and in murmurings at providential dispensations. No grateful note escapes his lips, no grateful sentiment seems to move his heart towards his Maker and Benefactor.

Every one has his trials, and must bear them—the sensitive poet, as well as the common-sense prose man. But the poet is frequently peculiar in the use which he makes of his trials. He has a rare faculty of amplifying and deepening common events and every day occurrences;—circumstances, which are not only common to humanity, but needful and salutary. These he seems to array in terror, for the pleasure of starting from them in dismay.

He gathers before the mind all his luckless events and disappointed hopes, and after duly brooding over them, despatches imagination to every wardrobe for the hero's costume, and calls in all the powers of figure and melody to give a touching effect to the story of his woes.

I suppose that the poet is to be considered, in such cases, his own hero, and hero's sentiments, the poet's sentiments.

Such poetry may be excellent, but what is the effect of it, excellent as it may be, but to nourish in himself, and occasion in others, a morbid sensibility and repining spirit? Has it not a tendency to quench every spark of love, and silence every emotion of gratitude to our best Friend and Benefactor? who has given us being, richly endowed our nature, surrounded us with his bounties, and placed before us the prospect and hopes of a blessed immortality, which we fail to realize only through our own madness.

It is true that the poetic talent, as well as others, is designed for use; but then, it is a legitimate use; one that shall make him who possesses it and others better and happier; and one that shall recognize the "Giver, honor his name, and advance his cause on the earth."

M.

LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC.

For the Recorder & Telegraph.

POETRY AND POETS.

I am rather inclined to think that the characteristics

of good poetry change from time to time, according to

the versatility of the public taste in these things; and,

it may be, that poets are not unmindful of the fact, and

make it their business to meet the reigning requisition.

What was really good poetry a century since, may be

POETRY.

FOR THE LADIES' LITERARY CABINET.

TO MY FLUTE.

Little tube of sweetest sound,
With silver key, and ivory bound,
That seem'st in gifted hand to be
The fairy wand of minstrelsy.
Though no strings produce thy tone,
The heart-strings, they are all thine own ;
Thine to attune and harmonize,
Whatever feeling on them lies.
When the eye of joy burns burns bright,
When the heart beats free and light,
Thine it is with sweetest care,
To measure all the pleasure there.
In the darken'd hour of grief,
When the spirit shuns relief,
Thine it is with sweetest power,
To chase the cloud upon that hour.
Deeply vers'd I ween thou art
In the secrets of my heart ;
For every secret there that lies,
Is told to thee without disguise.
Thou mark'st the cause of every sigh,
Of every tear that dims mine eye,
And bid'st me with a voice of cheer,
Dispel the sigh and dry the tear.

O better Friend ! than that the bard
Beholds with such a fond regard,
When wrapt away from earthly things,
His soul is utter'd on the strings ;
And forms from Fancy's boundless store,
Forms he never saw before,
In celestial costume bright,
Fantastic glide before his sight,
Ere they vanish, leave behind
Their likeness on his raptur'd mind,
And fondly flatter as they fly,
That his name shall never die.
Then the lyre that he possesses,
Then the strings his finger presses,
Seem more worthy of his pride,
Than the wealth of worlds beside.
Soon the wretch awakes to know,
That lyre is but to mock his woe ;
That Fancy's forms attendant wait
To tantalize his real fate ;
That Nature, when that lyre she gave,
Had doomed him to be feeling's slave ;
Doomed his eyes to wake and weep,
When other eyes are sealed in sleep ;
And that the present anguish brings
Upon its sweet seducing strings.

And better friend, than that whose voice
Bids the warrior's soul rejoice,
Fires his spirit to engage
Where the war-storm spends its rage ;
Gives him as he draws his steel,
The pledge of glory, then to feel
The shout of conquest, then to hear,
Is that voice so loud and clear ;
Seated on a foaming steed,
That hears the sound, and burns to bleed.
Soon, all soon, that lofty tone

Responds to misery's deepest groan ;
Soon, ah soon, the calm of death
Is chas'd with that unfeeling breath !
Where the wounded soldier lies,
And rolls in pain his sightless eyes ;
Those sounds, his agonies increase,
Nor let his spirit die in peace !
From the lyre, by Poet borne,
That seems the badge of those that mourn ;
From the clarion's lofty tones,
That seem accompanied with groans,
I turn, my little Friend, to thee
Who ne'er insultest misery,
But stulest to the wounded heart,
To ease and not increase the smart ;
To shed a sacred feeling there,
That has no kindred with despair,
And chase with potent charm away,
The fiends that hate the face of day.

When the night is all serene,
And the smallest star is seen,
When the sea forgets to roar,
Slumbering on the shelly shore,
And the wild-thyme's blossoms sweet,
Wet with dew the minstrel's feet ;
List ! while every tongue is mute,
He sighs his spirit in the flute ;
Soft and sweet the numbers rise,
For love is in the minstrel's sighs ;
Bold and full, the numbers flow,
For they ease the minstrel's woe ;
The aged pilgrim lingering near,
His spirit listening in his ear,
Feels what he despair'd of feeling,
Rapture to his bosom stealing !
Echo tries, but tries in vain
To grasp so exquisite a strain
In the sea-breeze passing by,
The duleet numbers swell and die.

REVICAM.

POETRY: COMEDY IN THE CAGE AN ODE

The Ordeal; a Critical Journal of Politics and Literature (1809-1809); Jan 14, 1809; 1, 2;
American Periodicals
pg. 22

POETRY.

Few complaints have been more frequently preferred and in every instance have been so well maintained, as that, which charges the present theatrical taste, with nonsensical and affected sentiment, hard-strained wit and frivolous repartee. The scene painter, and not the poet, seems to be the object of the greatest attention ; and wild beasts, demons and angels the chief personages, to exhibit whom, the pageantry of the stage is contrived. To effect this desirable end, real dogs have been taught to plunge into real water before the audience ; wild-men, wood-demons, spectres, caravans, sorcerers, giants, oracles, green, black, red and blue fiends, are put in requisition from known and unknown worlds ; the scene painter and tailor are taught to manufacture

them in legions, and they are then produced to frighten the young, and delight the full-grown children, who compose the audience. "How natural," exclaims a lady, "is that hell represented; and then that fiery fiend! the painter must surely have been familiar with such sights, or he never could have drawn them so truly."

We really are unacquainted with any subject which requires more decisive exposure, than this tendency to applaud the marvellous and corrupt taste, by which modern authors are directed. The following parody of "*Collins's Ode on the Passions*," has the exposure of this perverted taste in view. The style is not very successfully laboured, nor is the parody remarkably close; yet the thoughts are some of them eminently happy, and others singularly humorous; but it is mainly to be commended for its beneficial tendency. We offer no other apology for introducing it than this, that the same taste which it is intended to expose has already spread very widely in America, and threatens to eradicate every principle of legitimate comedy which has ever been implanted in the country.

COMEDY IN THE CAGE.

AN ODE.

—————“Ordine nullo
Oscula dispensat natos supra per omnes.”

OVID.

WHEN Comedy, poor dame was old,
A vagrant strumpet and a scold,
The beadle forc'd her to remain
In a tall cage near Drury-lane:
Her children all, with different faces,
Sprang from promiscuous embraces,
With bawling, ballad-singing yell,
Crowded around her vaulted cell:
Till once, 'tis said, in riot frisky,
High prim'd with true Hibernian whiskey,
The motley Savoyarding band
In the piazza took their stand:
And as they oft had tried apart
The mumming masquerading art
Each, to please the gaping crowd,
Rehears'd his separate part alou

First *Snip snap* aim'd her skill to try,
(A spurious branch of repartee)
And giggling laugh'd she knew not why,
E'en at her own affected glee.

Next enter'd puzzle-headed *Plot*,
His limbs a fowler's net surrounded;

Striving to tear each stubborn knot,
He left "confusion worse confounded!"

Then *Bathos* pour'd from brazen throat,
Ideas poor, in language rich ;
Still striving to o'erleap the moat,
But falling headlong in the ditch.

But thou, *Stage Loyalty*, all boast and brag,
What was thy sublime oration ?
Where'er the scene, or false or true,
Whether in China or Peru,
Still, still it prais'd the English nation,
And to Britannia bade the world submit ;
Still would the patriot strain prolong,
And from the gallery, box and pit
Call bowing Encore, to repeat the song ;
And whilst in his own praise he spoke
Encore stood by and bawl'd out "hearts of Oak;"
Whilst *Loyalty* huzza'd and wav'd the British flag :

And longer had he wav'd—but elest in two
Arch-rainbow Scenery arose,
His trembling lips the magick whistle blew,
And straight appear'd the craggy rocks,
High mountains, drawing-rooms and flocks,
Prisons to guard a truant daughter,
And cataracts of real water ;
And dapper trees in new green clothes,
All nodding "How d'ye do," in rows ;
And though sometimes, each loud applause between,
Rejected *Costume* at his side,
"All this is mighty pretty," cried ;
"But tell me, gaudy painter, what
"It has to do with me or *Plot*?"
Still Scenery lengthen'd out his tether,
And Europe, Asia, Afric, danc'd a jig together.

Thy gambols, *Farce*, now high, now low,
Were nought but war-whoop, stride and grin ;
'Twas now philanthropy in Merchants' Row,
And now a booted harlequin.

With eyes upturn'd and hose unmended,
Pale Sentiment a tub ascended,
And from her methodistick throne,
In piteous lamentable tone,

Pour'd in Soliloquy the doleful note,
While caught from box to box around,
Dulness bore the soothing sound,
Soft o'er the pit the drowsy murmur's float
And round the gall'ries flit in fond delay ;
Till tir'd with clapping and encoring,
All gently nodding, dozing, snoring,
In sleep the audience died away.

But O how alter'd was the wondering stare,
When mad *Buffoonery*, leaping forth to view,
A fool's-cap jingling on his crown,
One stocking red, the other blue,
Cried "dam'me, that's your sort," and knock'd old Squaretoes
down ;
Then strew'd the earth with broken crockery ware.
The heroes of the upper gallery go
In gathering crowds to see the show,
Creeping from forth their alleys low ;
Exulting Folly join'd the yell,
And Bedlam shook his chains through every cell.

Last came *Pun*, as Janus sturdy,
He in zig-zag motion prancing ;
To the jews-harp his teeth address'd ;
But soon he spied the hurdy-gurdy,
Whose buzz ambiguous pleas'd his ear the best.
They would have thought who heard him gabble
His Babel jargon to the rabble,
They saw in village pool a goose,
Her red beak split, her pinions loose,
To her own hisses madly dancing.
Whilst as conundrums round he flung,
Pun join'd with Folly in an Irish reel ;
Naked her body was, and light her heel,
And he, sworn foe to melancholy,
Scorning to be outdone by Folly,
Shook nameless nothings from his quiv'ring tongue.

O Comedy, thou fallen fair !
Friend to pleasure, foe to care,
Now common grown to half the town—
Where is thy former fair renown ?
Whene'er stage history records
The memory of thy wedded lords,

Dost thou no fond remembrance feel
For Congreve, Coleman, Cibber, Steele ?
Hadst thou reserv'd for such a race
Thy matrimonial, chaste embrace,
Thy womb had ne'er produc'd to view
This spurious raggamuffin crew.
Tis said, and I believe the tale,
Thy lash of old could more avail,
Wrought more amendment from the stage,
Than all that charms this senseless age.
For shame ! give o'er this vagrant life,
Become once more a wedded wife ;
Or turn to fasting, prayers, and Lent,
And in thy widowhood repent.

ART. II.—1. *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron, from the Year 1808 to the End of 1814.* By the late R. C. DALLAS, Esq. 8vo. Philadelphia. A. Small, and Carey and Lea. 1825.

- 2. *Correspondence of Lord Byron with a Friend; including his Letters to his Mother; in 1809, 1810, and 1811.*** 12mo. Philadelphia. Carey and Lea. 1825.
- 3. *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron; noted during a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the Years 1821 and 1822.*** By THOMAS MEDWIN, Esq. of the 24th Light Dragoons. 12mo. New York. 1824.

THERE are few individuals who, during the age in which they lived, have excited stronger interest than Lord Byron. His character and writings are a subject well worthy of attention. On the former, some light is thrown by the publications, which have appeared since his death.

Among these, Mr Dallas' Recollections, though the work of a weak and vain man, has a certain degree of value. It illustrates the history of Lord Byron's character. Mr Dallas, who was an author by profession, has been known principally as the writer of some indifferent novels, and the translator of Bertrand de Moleville's Annals of the French Revolution. He was connected with the family of the Byrons; his sister having been married to an uncle of the poet. His acquaintance with Lord Byron, however, commenced after the latter had published his juvenile poems, entitled Hours of Idleness. Upon this occasion, Mr Dallas addressed a letter to him, saying that 'he felt irresistibly impelled to pay him a tribute, on the effusions of a noble mind in strains so truly poetic.' Having commenced in this manner, he continued to administer his admiration liberally, at a time, when such admiration was of more value to Lord Byron, than it afterwards became. The acquaintance strengthened; and Mr Dallas superintended the publication of the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and of the first two cantos of Childe Harold; acting, at once, as critic and corrector of the press. For these and for other services, he was rewarded, but not, as he thought, repaid

by the copyright of several of Lord Byron's publications. Their friendship, however, was not formed to last, and was broken off long before the death of Lord Byron.

Captain Medwin's intimacy with Lord Byron commenced at a late period in the life of the latter, when he had not an extensive choice of associates. The authenticity of his book has been controverted. Mr Murray, Lord Byron's publisher, has proved, that much of the conversation, reported to have passed respecting himself, is incorrect and injurious. Still the question arises, whether this want of correctness is to be charged upon Lord Byron or Captain Medwin ; and there seems to be no satisfactory ground for deciding against the latter. Inaccuracies of statement, likewise, have been pointed out by a writer in a late number of the Westminster Review, supposed to be Lord Byron's friend, Mr Hobhouse. As to some of them, there may be a doubt, as in the former case, which of the two individuals concerned is responsible. For others, however, Captain Medwin must be regarded as solely accountable. The article, which has been referred to, proves that he has not always been careful in the statement of facts, that he has committed some blunders ;* and, perhaps, that he has sometimes ascribed to Lord Byron, rather what he might have said, than what he did say. But, on the whole, this attack upon Captain Medwin's book may serve rather to confirm than to weaken one's belief in its general credibility. With an evident perception on the part of the writer, that its statements are not honorable to Lord Byron, and a strong inclination to detect mistakes, still little is disproved or contradicted, which would much affect our estimate of Lord Byron's character, or even manners. No motive is assigned by the reviewer, to explain why the author should have reported the conversation of Lord Byron falsely ; except one, a desire to appear more intimate with him, than he really was. The accounts of Medwin correspond to the

* Captain Medwin represents Byron as saying that the words, '*Thou tremblest*'—'*'Tis with age then,*' which occur in his *Marino Faliero*, 'were taken from the Old Bailey proceedings. Some judge observed to the witness, "Thou tremblest"—"*'Tis with cold then,*" was the reply.'

'Who does not know,' asks his reviewer, 'that this famous speech, which the Conversation writer made his Lord Byron say, was made in the Old Bailey, was uttered by Bailly, the mayor of Paris, on his way to the scaffold. That the real Lord Byron should make so ludicrous a blunder is morally impossible.' Lord Byron refers to the reply of Bailly in his note on the passage.

impression, which Byron has given of himself by his writings, and by the notorious facts in his life. His conversation, as reported by the former, is in general such as one might suppose it would be. The style of expression corresponds with that of his prose writings. The remarks upon almost all subjects, even those of mere literature, are superficial ; the result of unsettled principles of judgment and taste. The temper discovered is characteristic. He is represented as talking much of himself and his works ; as full of spleen toward others, especially those who had been most nearly allied to him, and as hardly concealing his contempt for his few remaining associates, such as Shelley, ‘the snake,’ as he was pleased to call him, and Leigh Hunt, ‘the author of Nimini Pimini, and Follyage,’ titles which he applied to his poems. //He appears as a thorough libertine, devoid of all the proper feelings of a man, toward his wife, his mother, and it may be added, for the case is glaring, toward the degraded females with whom he had been connected. He seems to have regarded woman, only as an object of sensuality and insult. The same character is obvious in some of his later writings. //

Supposing, however, Lord Byron’s conversation to be, in general, correctly reported in this book, still it is questionable how far his statements are to be depended upon. Captain Medwin’s visits were frequently, as he says, at 11 o’clock in the evening ; and considering the accounts which he gives of Lord Byron’s habits of life, the latter could not always, at that hour, be expected to recollect or to state facts with great accuracy. The general air of his conversation, as reported, may lead one to suspect, likewise, that his vanity sometimes betrayed him into extravagancies. Disposed, therefore, as one may be, from the present state of the evidence, to regard the book as, in the main, a credible narrative of Lord Byron’s conversations ; yet on account of the probable inaccuracies both of the speaker and the reporter, it is to be appealed to with caution ; but with proper caution some use may be made of it.

The conversations reported by Medwin, took place during two of the last years of Lord Byron’s life. But in the degradation into which he fell, when he had become the author of Cain and Don Juan, we must not forget his extraordinary

powers. At that period, ‘all that gives gloss to sin had passed away,’

‘ And rooted stood in manhood’s hour,
The weeds of vice without the flower.’

The moral change between youth and middle age was perhaps only such, as might have been anticipated ; but there were seasons in his life, when the passions and vices, which at last completed their work of ruin, seem to have lost something of their force ; and the evil spirit, of which he was the prey, seems to have been driven off, by the strong action of his genius and his better nature. He had the power, beyond almost any other poet, of uttering deep tones of feeling, which dwelt upon the mind, and called forth strong sympathy, even when connected with a perverted ostentation of lamentable defects of character. His life, too, forms a melancholy story, melancholy enough in reality, without our being deceived by the affectation of wretchedness, which he assumed for the purpose of poetical display. He was unfortunate in the moral influences which operated upon his character. Much of compassion, therefore, some lingerings of sympathy, and admiration for his genius, though his intellectual powers were great only within a limited sphere, mingle with the reprobation, with which his life and writings must on the whole be regarded. At one period of his course, an observer, ignorant of the evil to which he had been exposed, might have applied to him the lines of his favorite poet—

‘ Blest with each gift of nature and of art,
And wanting nothing but an honest heart.’

With more kindness, however, and, perhaps, more justice, one might have ascribed to him a character, which he himself has drawn, as that of his Manfred.

This should have been a noble creature ; he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled ; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
Mixed, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive.

Lord Byron's father, who was notorious for his profligacy, died while his son was a child. The marriage of his father with his mother was preceded by an elopement, and appears to have alienated the families of both parties. It was, as may be supposed, an unhappy one. His mother, in whose care he was left, appears to have been unfit to form or influence his character in a proper manner. He is represented by Medwin, as speaking of her without feeling or reserve; and his letters to her discover little tenderness or respect. This is the more remarkable, as his mother and himself seem to have been almost alone in the world. According to Dallas, they were, during his youth, neglected by his other relations.

At the university he fell, according to every account, including his own, into a course of reckless profligacy. The following is an extract from his reply to Mr Dallas' first letter, written in his twentieth year.

'My pretensions to virtue are unluckily so few, that though I should be happy to merit, I cannot accept, your applause in that respect. One passage in your letter struck me forcibly; you mention the two Lords Lyttleton in the manner they respectively deserve, and will be surprised to hear the person, who is now addressing you, has been frequently compared to the *latter*. I know I am injuring myself in your esteem by this avowal, but the circumstance was so remarkable from your observation, that I cannot help relating the fact. The events of my short life have been of so singular a nature, that, though the pride commonly called honor has, and I trust ever will, prevent me from disgracing my name by a mean or cowardly action, I have been already held up as the votary of licentiousness, and the disciple of infidelity. How far justice may have dictated this accusation I cannot pretend to say, but, like the *gentleman* to whom my religious friends, in the warmth of their charity, have already devoted me, I am made worse than I really am.' pp. 7, 8.

The following is from a subsequent letter to Mr Dallas.

'I once thought myself a philosopher, and talked nonsense with great decorum; I defied pain, and preached up equanimity. For some time this did very well, for no one was in *pain* for me but my friends, and none lost their patience but my hearers. At last, a fall from my horse convinced me that bodily suffering was an evil; and the worst of an argument overset my maxims and my

temper at the same moment, so I quitted Zeno for Aristippus, and conceive that pleasure constitutes the *το καλον*.¹¹ In morality, I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments, and Socrates to St Paul, though the two latter agree in their opinion of marriage. In religion I favor the Catholic emancipation, but do not acknowledge the pope ; and I have refused to take the sacrament, because I do not think eating bread or drinking wine from the hand of an earthly vicar will make me an inheritor of heaven. I hold virtue in general, or the virtues severally, to be only in the disposition, each a *feeling*, not a principle.¹² I believe truth the prime attribute of the Deity ; and death an eternal sleep, at least of the body. You have here a brief compendium of the sentiments of the *wicked* George Lord Byron ; and, till I get a new suit, you will perceive I am badly clothed.' pp. 13, 14.

While at the university, he became intimate with one, whom he thus celebrates in the concluding note to the first canto of Childe Harold.

'I should have ventured a verse to the memory of the late Charles Skinner Matthews, Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge, were he not too much above all praise of mine. His powers of mind, shown in the attainment of greater honors, against the ablest candidates, than those of any graduate on record at Cambridge, have sufficiently established his fame on the spot where it was acquired, while his softer qualities live in the recollection of friends, who loved him too well to envy his superiority.' p. 196.

Of Mr Matthews, however, he speaks in the following terms in a letter to Mr Dallas.

' You did not know M ** ; he was a man of the most astonishing powers, as he sufficiently proved at Cambridge, by carrying off more prizes and fellowships, against the ablest candidates, than any other graduate on record ; but a most decided atheist, indeed noxiously so, for he proclaimed his principles in all societies.' p. 143.

Lord Byron early experienced some of those consequences, which a mind of much feeling, and of much compass of thought, must suffer from the opinions he had adopted, and the course of conduct he pursued ; satiety, loathing of the world, remorse, and misanthropy. He formed friendships with the worthless, and finding them worthless, in his disappointment and despite, he denied the existence of all disinterested

feeling. His most craving passion was the desire of fixing upon himself the admiration and sympathy, or at least the wonder and gaze of men. He was desirous of possessing some extraordinary distinction, which should separate him from all others, as one entitled to peculiar regard. He wished to exhibit himself as standing alone, ‘among men, but not of them ;’

‘ —————In a shroud of thoughts,
Which were not their thoughts.’

But this is a passion, the most irritating, and the most liable to disappointment. Its natural tendency is to misanthropy. He, whom it possesses, is led to look upon those around him, as selfish, low minded, cold and unjust ; because they do not view him as an object of particular interest. He is utterly discontented with that small portion, which most of us can fairly claim, of the general regard of others ; of the regard of any, except those few, whom we may have attached to us by virtue, kindness, and equal returns of sympathy. He feels, as if he were defrauded of his rights by his fellowmen, when they suffer him to remain unnoticed. The strong workings of this passion at last made Byron a poet ; and a poet, whose principal subject, presented either with or without disguise, was himself. The passion attained its object ; but not its gratification, for that is impossible. Byron had, at last, few rivals in fame, and was as miserable, and more degraded than before.

While yet at the university, at the age of nineteen, he published his first volume of poems. There is much in them which shows an unformed mind, an unpractised hand, and a want of good taste. But, considering the age at which they were written, they are uncommon productions. To say the least, and that is saying but little, they are as good as three quarters of the verses, to be found in those monumental depositories, called bodies of English poetry. What is most remarkable, with but a few exceptions, they discover little of that peculiar moral character, and of those dark feelings, which afterward were among the most striking characteristics of his poetry. They express, for the most part, common sentiments and affections. Several of them are addressed to youthful friends, and written with much appear-

ance of feeling. The volume, in general, hardly connects itself with the subsequent exhibitions of his mind. We will give a few extracts, not so much for the sake of the poetry, as to illustrate the poetical character, in which Byron, at this time, wished to appear, corresponding, probably, in a considerable degree, to the yet unfixed state of his real character.

Oh ! yes, I will own we were dear to each other,
The friendships of childhood, though fleeting, are true ;
The love, which you felt, was the love of a brother,
Nor less the affection I cherish'd for you.

But Friendship can vary her gentle dominion,
The attachment of years, in a moment, expires ;
Like Love, too, she moves on a swift waving pinion,
But glows not, like Love, with unquenchable fires.

Full oft have we wander'd through Ida together,
And blest were the scenes of our youth, I allow ;
In the spring of our life, how serene is the weather !
But winter's rude tempests are gathering now.

No more with Affection shall Memory blending
The wonted delights of our childhood retrace ;
When Pride steels the bosom, the heart is unbending,
And what would be Justice, appears a disgrace.

However, dear S——, for I still must esteem you,
The few, whom I love, I can never upbraid,
The chance, which has lost, may in future redeem you,
Repentance will cancel the vow you have made.

I will not complain, and though chill'd is affection,
With me no corroding resentment shall live ;
My bosom is calmed by the simple reflection,
That both may be wrong, and that both should forgive.

You knew, that my soul, that my heart, my existence,
If danger demanded were wholly your own ;
You knew me unalter'd, by years or by distance,
Devoted to love and to friendship alone.

You knew,—but away with the vain retrospection,
The bond of affection no longer endures ;
Too late you may droop o'er the fond recollection,
And sigh for the friend who was formerly yours.

For the present, we part,—I will hope not forever,
For time and regret will restore you at last ;
To forget our dissension we both should endeavor,
I ask no atonement, but days like the past.

What follows are the concluding verses of a poem addressed to the Earl of —.

Not for a moment may you stray
From Truth's secure, unerring way,
May no delights decoy ;
O'er roses may your footsteps move,
Your smiles be ever smiles of love,
Your tears be tears of joy.

Oh ! if you wish, that happiness
Your coming days and years may bless,
And virtues crown your brow ;
Be, still, as you were wont to be,
Spotless as you 've been known to me,
Be, still, as you are now.

And though some trifling share of praise,
To cheer my last declining days,
To me were doubly dear ;
Whilst blessing your beloved name,
I'd *wave* at once a poet's fame,
To *prove* a prophet here.

The next extract is from a poem to E. N. L. Esq.

Though Youth has flown on rosy pinion,
And Manhood claims his stern dominion,
Age will not every hope destroy,
But yield some hours of sober joy.

Yes, I will hope that Time's broad wing,
Will shed around some dews of spring ;
But, if his scythe must sweep the flowers,
Which bloom among the fairy bowers,
Where smiling youth delights to dwell,
And hearts with early rapture swell ;
If frowning Age, with cold control,
Confines the current of the soul,
Congeals the tear of Pity's eye,
Or checks the sympathetic sigh,

Or hears, unmov'd, Misfortune's groan,
And bids me feel for self alone ;
Oh ! may my bosom never learn,
 To sooth its wonted heedless flow,
Still, still despise the censor stern,
 But ne'er forget another's wo.

Yes, as you knew me in the days,
O'er which Remembrance yet delays,
Still may I rove, untutor'd, wild,
And even in age, at heart a child.

Other similar passages might be quoted. But with all this occasional difference of feeling, there are breakings forth of the same spirit, which afterwards displayed itself ; and it is remarkable that where these appear, the expression becomes more energetic.

Few are my years, and, yet I feel
 The world was ne'er design'd for me ;
Ah ! why do darkening shades conceal
 The hour when man must cease to be ?
Once I beheld a splendid dream,
 A visionary scene of bliss ;
Truth !—wherefore did thy hated beam
 Awake me to a world like this ?

I lov'd—but those I lov'd are gone ;
 Had friends—my early friends are fled ;
How cheerless feels the heart alone,
 When all its former hopes are dead !
Though gay companions, o'er the bowl,
 Dispel awhile the sense of ill,
Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul,
 The heart—the heart is lonely still.

How dull ! to hear the voice of those,
 Whom rank, or chance, whom wealth, or power,
Have made, though neither friends nor foes,
 Associates of the festive hour !
Give me again, a faithful few,
 In years and feelings still the same,
And I will fly the midnight crew,
 Where boisterous joy is but a name.

One poem relates to a romantic story of an attachment, which he had felt, while a boy, to a lady considerably older than himself ; and the disappointment of which he was fond of representing, as having had a very melancholy effect upon his morals and happiness. It is the same story to which he alludes in his ‘ Dream.’ The following is from the poem first mentioned.

Ah ! since thy angel form is gone,
My heart no more can rest with any ;
But what it sought in thee alone,
Attempts, alas ! to find in many.

Then, fare thee well, deceitful maid,
’Twere vain and fruitless to regret thee ;
Nor Hope, nor Memory yield their aid,
But Pride may teach me to forget thee.

Yet all this giddy waste of years,
This tiresome round of palling pleasures,
These varied loves, these matrons’ fears,
These thoughtless strains to passion’s measures—

If thou wert mine, had all been hush’d ;
This cheek, now pale from early riot,
With Passion’s hectic ne’er had flush’d,
But bloom’d in calm domestic quiet.

Yes, once the rural scene was sweet,
For nature seem’d to smile before thee ;
And once my breast abhor’d deceit,
For then it beat but to adore thee.

But, now, I seek for other joys,
To think, would drive my soul to madness ;
In thoughtless throngs, and empty noise,
I conquer half my bosom’s sadness.

Yet, even in these, a thought will steal,
In spite of every vain endeavor ;
And fiends might pity what I feel,
To know, that thou art lost forever.

The lady referred to in this poem, and in the ‘ Dream,’ could not have been the same, whom he designated as

Thyrza ; and in the one case or the other, therefore, he seems to have made an unnecessary demand upon public sympathy.

Upon the publication of his poems, they were reviewed in the Edinburgh Review, in that style of flippant, unfeeling, insulting criticism, which at one time contributed as much to the celebrity of that work, as the talent actually displayed in it ; though since its novelty has passed away, it begins to be regarded in its true character, as equally offensive to right principles and good taste. The effect of such a review upon feelings like those of Byron, may be easily imagined. All his passions were thrown into commotion, and poured their gall through his mind. It, probably, had a far more important influence upon his future character, than the disappointed affection, which has just been referred to. It served to blast those feelings, by which he might have been allied to his fellowmen, and to render him the proud, insulated, unhappy being, which he subsequently became. It was administering poison to one in a fever. According to Medwin, he said respecting it,—

‘ When I first saw the review of my “ Hours of Idleness,” I was furious ; in such a rage as I never have been since. I dined that day with Scrope Davies, and drank three bottles of claret to drown it ; but it only boiled the more. That critique was a masterpiece of low wit, a tissue of scurrilous abuse. I remember there was a great deal of vulgar trash in it which was meant for humor, “ about people being thankful for what they could get”—“ not looking a gift horse in the mouth,” and such stable expressions.’ p. 96.

For the wrong which he had suffered, Byron endeavored, in the first shock of his feelings, to revenge himself not merely upon the editor of the review and his associates, but upon almost all his contemporaries who had been more favored than himself in gaining praise as poets. He was sufficiently enraged ‘ to run a muck, and tilt at all he met.’ He produced his ‘ English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.’ But his satire is violent, indiscriminating, and undignified. It is full of the coarse common places of abuse, with little range of thought or allusion. His blows are random and ineffectual. There is not much, which has even the appearance of being characteristic of the individuals whom he assails. His

epithets, and accessory ideas, have often no relation to his main purpose. His attack on Jeffrey, in which he might be expected to put forth his strength, is, we presume, commonly regarded as neither witty nor powerful. Let us take another short passage, which is a fair specimen of the poem.

Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
The golden crested haughty Marmion,
Now forging scrolls, now foremost in the fight,
Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight,
The gibbet or the field prepar'd to grace ;
A mighty mixture of the great and base.
And think'st thou, Scott ! by vain conceit perchance,
On public taste to foist thy stale romance,
Though Murray with his Miller may combine
To yield thy muse just half a crown per line ?
No ! when the sons of song descend to trade,
Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade.
Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame ;
Low may they sink to merited contempt,
And scorn remunerate the mean attempt !
Such be their meed, such still the just reward
Of prostituted Muse and hireling bard !
For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
And bid a long ' good night to Marmion.'
These are the themes that claim our plaudits now,
These are the bards to whom the Muse must bow ;
While Milton, Dryden, Pope, alike forgot,
Resign their hallow'd bays to Walter Scott.

It requires no great exercise of generosity to forgive such an attack. Byron had not the qualifications of a satirist. He wanted wit, facility of allusion, and quick perception of character. He wanted truth, or its substitute, probability, and just principles of taste and moral judgment. In the latter part of his life, he attempted this style of writing again, and produced a poem, called the Age of Bronze, which hardly emerged into notice. On the whole, perhaps, it is better than his first effort ; but how far he had improved by age, may be judged of in some degree by its conclusion.

But, tired of foreign follies, I turn home,
And sketch the group—the picture 's yet to come.

My Muse 'gan weep, but ere a tear was spilt,
She caught Sir William Curtis in a kilt!
While thronged the chiefs of every Highland clan
To hail their brother, Vich Ian Alderman!
Guildhall grows Gael, and echoes with Erse roar,
While all the common Council cry, 'Claymore!'
To see proud Albyn's Tartan's as a belt
Gird the gross sirloin of a City Celt,
She burst into a laughter so extreme,
That I awoke—and lo! it was *no dream!*

Here, reader, will we pause;—if there 's no harm in
This first—you 'll have, perhaps, a second 'Carmen.'

Byron, in his first satire, talks of treading 'the path which Pope and Gifford trod before.' The question, whether he be equal to Gifford, is not worth discussing; but his resemblance to Pope is that of a 'satyr,' butting with his horns, to 'Hyperion with his glittering shafts of war.' The verses of Pope are vivid with meaning. Single words open a view of a train of thoughts, or throw a flash of light upon some striking image. There is a consistency in his conceptions of character, and in all the figures and epithets by which they are emblazoned, which makes us feel a conviction at once of the sincerity of the writer, and of the correctness of his perceptions. This conviction is, for the most part, just, for Pope was a conscientious satirist, and proud of his adherence to truth;

'Truth guards the poet, sanctifies his line,
And makes immortal, verse as mean as mine.'

It has contributed to make his verses immortal; for in satire, our natural sentiments require justice. The characters of most of those, against whom he directed his wit or his indignation, remain fixed in the memories of men, as he has drawn them. No poem of the kind can be compared in vigor and effect with that in which he made a common slaughter of the low, profligate, but, some of them, noted and mischievous writers of his times—

Δεινη δε κλαγγη γενετ' αργυρεοτο βιοιο.*

Its great fault is the gross indecency of some passages; but

* Dreadful was the clang of the silver bow.

the age, in which Pope wrote, was not civilised, like the present, by the influence of female taste and literature.

Byron's suppression of his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' was no loss to his reputation, and little favor to those whom he had made the objects of his satire; for his attacks were not of a kind to be felt or remembered even by them, except as mere intended insults or expressions of ill will. He himself, however, appears to have looked back upon the work with considerable satisfaction; and alludes to it repeatedly in that poem, in which he gave the last exhibition of his character. He was, professedly, a warm admirer of Pope; and, in the latter years of his life, defended his poetical merit against the attack of Bowles; but there is hardly more of philosophical criticism in his defence, than in the writings of his opponent. His admiration of Pope was natural; not merely from a perception of the real power of that poet, but also from the circumstance, that he stood alone in his age, enjoying that preeminent distinction, to possess which, in some form or another, was Byron's strongest passion. There was a rank granted to Pope, which has hardly, if at all, been conceded to any other writer. He was looked up to as the moral and literary censor of his age. We are, at first view, struck with passages in his poetry, as written in a tone of great assumption, but when we examine the history of his life and writings, we find that he assumed no more than was conceded.

But, whatever might be the intrinsic merit of the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' still, a satire well versified, the production of a young, profligate nobleman, and abounding in personality, would find many readers and admirers. It soon ran through three editions, to the last of which was annexed a postscript, which is curious as a specimen of Lord Byron's character and wit; that character about which so much sentiment has been lavished, and that wit which has been thought so spirited and entertaining. The postscript was evidently written in a state of elation from the success of his work. He says,

'I have been informed, since the present edition went to the press, that my trusty and well beloved cousins, the Edinburgh Reviewers, are preparing a most vehement critique on my poor, gen-

tle, *unresisting* Muse, whom they have already so bedeviled with their ungodly ribaldry.

“Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ.”

‘I suppose I must say of Jeffrey, as Sir Anthony Aguecheek saith ; “An I had known he was so cunning of fence, I had seen him damned ere I had fought him.” What a pity it is, that I shall be beyond the Bosphorus before the next number has passed the Tweed. But I yet hope to light my pipe with it in Persia.

‘My northern friends have accused me, with justice, of personality towards their great literary Anthropophagus, Jeffrey ; but what else was to be done with him and his dirty pack, who feed by ‘lying and slandering,’ and slake their thirst by ‘evil speaking?’ I have adduced facts already well known, and of Jeffrey’s mind I have stated my free opinion, nor has he thence sustained any injury ;—what scavenger was ever soiled by being pelted with mud ? It may be said that I quit England because I have censured there, ‘persons of honor and wit about town ;’ but I am coming back again, and their vengeance will keep hot till my return. Those who know me can testify, that my motives for leaving England are very different from fears, literary or personal ; those who do not, may one day be convinced. Since the publication of this thing, my name has not been concealed ; I have been mostly in London, ready to answer for my transgressions, and in daily expectation of sundry cartels ; but, alas ! “the age of chivalry is over,” or, in the vulgar tongue, there is no spirit now-a-days.

‘There is a youth ycleped Hewson Clarke, (subaudi, Esquire,) a sizer of Emmanuel college, and I believe a denizen of Berwick upon Tweed, whom I have introduced in these pages, to much better company than he has been accustomed to meet ; he is, notwithstanding, a very sad dog, and for no reason, that I can discover, except a personal quarrel with a bear, kept by me at Cambridge, to sit for a fellowship, and whom the jealousy of his Trinity contemporaries prevented from success, has been abusing me, and what is worse, the defenceless innocent abovementioned, in the Satirist, for one year and some months. I am utterly unconscious of having given him any provocation ; indeed, I am guiltless of having heard his name till coupled with the Satirist. He has therefore no reason to complain, and I dare say that, like Sir Fretful Plagiary, he is rather *pleased* than otherwise. I have now mentioned all, who have done me the honor to notice me and mine, that is, my bear and my book, except the editor of the Satirist, who, it seems, is a gentleman, God wot ! I wish he could impart a little of his gentility to his subordinate scribblers.’

All this Byron insisted upon publishing, though Mr Dallas, in an exercise of good sense and friendship, uncommon on his part, urged its suppression in the strongest terms.

The following passage, from Dallas' Recollections, relates to Lord Byron's character, feelings, and mode of life, about the period of which we are speaking.

'Very soon after this, the satire appeared in its new form, but too late for its author to enjoy his additional laurels before he left England. I was with him almost every day while he remained in London. Misanthropy, disgust of life, leading to scepticism and impiety, prevailed in his heart and embittered his existence. He had for some time past been grossly attacked in several low publications, which he bore, however, with more temper than he did the blind headlong assault on his genius by the Edinburgh Review. Unaccustomed to female society, he at once dreaded and abhorred it; and spoke of women, such I mean, as he neither dreaded nor abhorred, more as playthings than companions. As for domestic happiness he had no idea of it. "A large family," he said, "appeared like opposite ingredients mixed perforce in the same salad, and he never relished the composition." Unfortunately, having never mingled in family circles, he knew nothing of them; and, from being at first left out of them by his relations, he was so completely disgusted that he avoided them, especially the female part. "I consider," said he, "collateral ties as the work of prejudice, and not the bond of the heart, which must choose for itself, unshackled." It was in vain for me to argue that the nursery, and a similarity of pursuits and enjoyments in early life, are the best foundations of friendship and of love; and that to choose freely, the knowledge of home was as requisite as that of wider circles. In those wider circles he had found no friend, and but few companions, whom he used to receive with an assumed gaiety, but real indifference at his heart, and spoke of with little regard, sometimes with sarcasm. He used to talk of one young man, who had been his schoolfellow, with an affection, which he flattered himself was returned. I occasionally met this friend at his apartments, before his last excursion to Newstead. Their portraits, by capital painters, were elegantly framed, and surmounted with their respective coronets, to be exchanged. However, whether taught by ladies in revenge to neglect Lord Byron, or actuated by frivolous inconstancy, he gradually lessened the number of his calls and their duration. Of this, however, Lord Byron made no complaint, till the very day I went to take my leave of him, which was the one previous to his departure. I found him bursting with indignation. "Will you believe it," said he, "I have just met ***, and asked him to come and sit an hour

with me ; he excused himself ; and what do you think was his excuse ? He was engaged with his mother and some ladies to go shopping ! And he knows I set out tomorrow, to be absent for years, perhaps never to return ! Friendship !—I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and family excepted, and perhaps my mother, a single being who will care what becomes of me."

'At this period of his life his mind was full of bitter discontent. Already satiated with pleasure, and disgusted with those companions who have no other resource, he had resolved on mastering his appetites ; he broke up his harems ; and he reduced his palate to a diet the most simple and abstemious ; but the passions of the heart were too mighty, nor did it ever enter his mind to overcome *them* ; resentment, anger, and hatred, held full sway over him, and his greatest gratification, at that time, was in overcharging his pen with gall, which flowed in every direction, against individuals, his country, the world, the universe, creation, and the Creator.'

His misfortunes in regard to his early friends, according to Medwin, were not confined to the estrangement of their affections. The latter represents him as saying ; 'Almost all the friends of my youth are dead ; either shot in duels, ruined, or in the galleys.' On another occasion Byron said to him.

'I was at this time a mere Bond street lounger ; a great man at lobbies, coffee, and gambling houses ; my afternoons were passed in visits, luncheons, lounging and boxing—not to mention drinking ! If I had known you in early life, you would not have been alive now. I remember Scrope Davies, H—, and myself, clubbing £19, all we had in our pockets, and losing it at a hell in St James's-street, at chicken-hazard, which may be called *fowl* ; and afterwards getting drunk together till H. and S. D. quarrelled. Scrope afterwards wrote to me for my pistols to shoot himself ; but I declined lending them, on the plea that they would be forfeited as a deodand. I knew my answer would have more effect than four sides of prosing.'

'Don't suppose, however, that I took any pleasure in all these excesses, or that parson A. K. or W—, were associates to my taste. The miserable consequences of such a life are detailed at length in my Memoirs. My own master at an age when I most required a guide, and left to the dominion of my passions when they were the strongest, with a fortune anticipated before I came into possession of it, and a constitution impaired by early excesses, I commenced my travels in 1809, with a joyless indifference to a world that was all before me.'

Leaving England, as mentioned in the last extract, in his twentysecond year, Lord Byron was absent for two years. Of his travels, one may find a sort of journal in the first two cantos of Childe Harold. During his absence, his mother seems to have been almost his only correspondent. There are twenty letters to her, which fill about fifty duodecimo pages. In giving them to Mr Dallas, the latter reports him to have said, ‘some day or other they will be curiosities.’ Considering what might have been expected from the writer, perhaps, they are such ; for these and the other letters, published by Dallas, as the ‘Correspondence of Lord Byron,’ form a collection, as intrinsically trifling and worthless, as was ever given to the world. Their value, if any, is accidental, arising from the illustration which they afford of the mind and character of their author.

On his return from his travels, he published the first two cantos of Childe Harold. Of the general level of the poetry in this production, the following stanzas are a fair specimen.

So deem'd the Childe, as o'er the mountains he
Did take his way in solitary guise ;
Sweet was the scene, yet soon he thought to flee,
More restless than the swallow in the skies ;
Though here awhile he learn'd to moralise,
For Meditation fix'd at times on him ;
And conscious Reason whisper'd to despise
His early youth, misspent in maddest whim ;
But as he gaz'd on truth his aching eyes grew dim.

To horse ! to horse ! he quits, forever quits
A scene of peace, though soothing to his soul ;
Again he rouses from his moping fits,
But seeks not now the harlot and the bowl.
Onward he flies, nor fix'd as yet the goal
Where he shall rest him on his pilgrimage ;
And o'er him many changing scenes must roll
Ere toil his thirst for travel can assuage,
Or he shall calm his breast, or learn experience sage.

Yet Mafra shall one moment claim delay
Where dwelt of yore the Lusian's luckless queen ;
And church and court did mingle their array,
And mass and revel were alternate seen ;

Lordlings and freres—ill sorted fry I ween !
But here the Babylonian whore hath built
A dome, where flaunts she in such glorious sheen,
That men forget the blood which she hath spilt,
And bow the knee to pomp that loves to varnish guilt.

O'er vales that teem with fruits, romantic hills,
(Oh that such hills upheld a free-born race !)
Whereon to gaze the eye with joyance fills,
Childe Harold wends through many a pleasant place.
Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace,
Oh ! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life, that bloated Ease can never hope to share.

More bleak to view the hills at length recede,
And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend ;
Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed !
Far as the eye discerns, withouten end,
Spain's realms appear whereon her shepherds tend
Flocks, whose rich fleece right well the trader knows.
Now must the pastor's arm his lambs defend ;
For Spain is compass'd by unyielding foes,
And all must shield their all, or share Subjection's woes.

Where Lusitania and her sister meet,
Deem ye what bounds the rival realms divide ?
Or ere the jealous queens of nations greet,
Doth Tayo interpose his mighty tide ?
Or dark Sierras rise in craggy pride ?
Or fence of art, like China's vasty wall ?—
Ne barrier wall, ne river deep and wide,
Ne horrid crags, nor mountains dark and tall,
Rise like the rocks that part Hispania's land from Gaul :

But these between a silver streamlet glides,
And scarce a name distinguisheth the brook,
Though rival kingdoms press its verdant sides ;
Here leans the idle shepherd on his crook,
And vacant on the rippling waves doth look,
That peaceful still 'twixt bitterest foeman flow ;
For proud each peasant as the noblest duke ;
Well doth the Spanish hind the difference know
'Twixt him and Lusian slave, the lowest of the low.

The above extract is from the first canto, what follows is from the second.

Fair Greece ! sad relic of departed worth !
Immortal, though no more ; though fallen, great !
Who now shall lead thy scatter'd children forth,
And long-accustom'd bondage uncreate ?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylæ's sepulchral strait—
Oh ! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas' banks, and call thee from the tomb :

Spirit of Freedom ! when on Phyle's brow
Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus and his train,
Couldst thou forebode the dismal hour which now
Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain ?
Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
But every carle can lord it o'er thy land ;
Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
From birth till death enslaved ; in word, in deed, unmann'd.

In all save form alone, how chang'd ! and who
That marks the fire still sparkling in each eye,
Who but would deem their bosoms burn'd anew
With thy unquenched beam, lost liberty !
And many dream withal the hour is nigh
That gives them back their fathers' heritage ;
For foreign arms and aid they fondly sigh,
Nor solely dare encounter hostile rage,
Or tear their name defil'd from Slavery's mournful page.

Hereditary bondsmen ! know ye not
Who would be free themselves must strike the blow ?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought.
Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye ? no !
True, they may lay your proud despoilers low,
But not for you will Freedom's altars flame.
Shades of the Helots ! triumph o'er your foe !
Greece ! change thy lords, thy state is still the same ;
Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame.

When riseth Lacedemon's hardihood,
When Thebes Epaminondas rears again,
When Athens' children are with arts endued,
When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men,

Then may'st thou be restored ; but not till then.
A thousand years scarce serve to form a state !
An hour may lay it in the dust ; and when
Can man its shattered splendor renovate,
Recall its virtues back, and vanquish Time and Fate !

And yet how lovely in thine age of wo,
Land of lost gods and godlike men ! art thou !
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favorite now.
Thy fanes, thy temples to thy surface bow,
Commingling slowly with heroic earth,
Broke with the share of every rustic plough ;
So perish monuments of mortal birth,
So perish all in turn, save well recorded Worth.

These are long extracts. They have been given in the hope of their being read in connexion with the subsequent remarks. At no very distant time, verses such as these were regarded by many, as among the most admirable productions of the age. But, if we are not altogether mistaken, the principal difference between them, and prose too dull to find a reader, consists in the circumstance of their being written in stanzas. Some passages in these cantos rise above, and others fall below what we have quoted ; for what is quoted is merely tame and prosaic, while the wit attempted, and the moral feeling discovered, are offensive. Passing over the lamentable parade of vulgar vice and common place infidelity, it may be asked whether sentiments such as the following, from the Albanian song, introduced into the second canto, are adapted to produce any feeling but disgust ; or what is the purpose of putting such thoughts into rhyme.

I ask not the pleasures which riches supply,
My sabre shall win what the feeble must buy ;
Shall win the young bride with her long flowing hair,
And many a maid from her mother shall tear.

I love the fair face of the maid in her youth,
Her caresses shall lull me, her music shall soothe ;
Let her bring from the chambers her many toned lyre,
And sing us a song on the fall of her sire.

But in these first two cantos, there is sometimes an energy of conception and expression, which their author, afterwards,

displayed more fully. They were accompanied, likewise, with a number of minor poems, some of which are among the most powerful and interesting of his productions. Such are the verses beginning—

O lady when I left the shore,
The distant shore which gave me birth,
I hardly thought to grieve once more,
To quit another spot on earth.

Such, too, are the verses addressed to Thyrza, or which apparently relate to the same real or imaginary object of affection.

And didst thou not, since death for thee
Prepared a light and pangless dart,
Once long for him thou ne'er shalt see,
Who held, and holds thee in his heart ?
Oh ! who like him had watch'd thee here ?
Or sadly mark'd thy glazing eye,
In that dread hour ere death appear,
When silent Sorrow fears to sigh,
Till all was past ? But when no more
'Twas thine to reck of human wo,
Affection's heart drops, gushing o'er,
Had flow'd as fast—as now they flow.

* * * *

Ours was the glance none saw beside ;
The smile none else might understand ;
The whisper'd thought of hearts allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand ;
The kiss so guiltless and refined
That Love each warmer wish forbore ;
Those eyes proclaim'd so pure a mind,
Even passion blush'd to plead for more.
The tone that taught me to rejoice,
When prone, unlike thee, to repine ;
The song, celestial from thy voice,
But sweet to me from none but thine ;

* * * *

But if in worlds more blest than this
Thy virtues seek a fitter sphere,
Impart some portion of thy bliss,
To wean me from mine anguish here.

Teach me—too early taught by thee !
To bear, forgiving and forgiven ;
On earth thy love was such to me ;
It fain would form my hope in heaven !

Other passages might be quoted equally touching. No one had more power than Byron, to utter that thrilling voice, which speaks a mind desolate, but unbroken. In these poems it is connected with the most passionate and tender expressions of affection for the dead, and with a moral purity and elevation of sentiment, which he has scarcely elsewhere discovered. But even these poems are polluted by his libertinism. With singular perversion of taste, he has thought it worth while to find a place for a stanza from one of his earlier productions, which has been already quoted,

Though gay companions o'er the bowl,
Dispel awhile the sense of ill ;
Though pleasure fire the maddening soul,
The heart—the heart is lonely still.

It may be objected, likewise, that the general tone of feeling is too much that of one,

Who will not look beyond the tomb,
And dares not hope for rest before.

There were various circumstances, which contributed to the popularity of this publication. It was written by a young nobleman, a circumstance, which, if it possessed any merit, was alone sufficient to give it celebrity. Its author was, or soon became, a man of the first notoriety in the highest circles of fashion. He had travelled, where few Englishmen had travelled before, having visited Ali Pacha in his den. The poem of Childe Harold was thought to shadow forth his own wayward, gloomy, wicked, but very interesting character. It contained much concerning Greece ; and the ‘woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep,’ the ‘isles that crown the Ægean deep,’ the ‘streams that wander in eternal light,’ are poetical in their very names ; and of these names there is a profusion in the second canto of Childe Harold. The favorable judgment of Gifford had been secured by the most lavish flattery in Byron's former poetry ; and it is strange, and

almost ludicrous, to observe the importance attached to his critical opinions, both by Mr Dallas and Lord Byron. The latter, in one of his letters to Mr Dallas, says, ‘as Gifford has ever been my Magnus Apollo, any approbation such as you mention, would, of course, be more welcome than, “all Bokhara’s vaunted gold, than all the gems of Samarkand.”’ In a subsequent letter, however, he seems to have viewed the matter in a juster light. He says; ‘his praise is nothing to the purpose. What could he say? He could not spit in the face of one, who had praised him in every possible way.’ But, without doubt, the consideration in which Gifford was held, depended much upon the circumstance of his being, at that time, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*. In addition to all this, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, upon the appearance of this publication, notwithstanding he had been so bitterly assailed by its author, took occasion to show his magnanimity, his contempt, or his policy, in an article in which it was highly praised, though containing passages not adapted to gratify one, to whom celebrity, in any shape, was not acceptable.

Among the minor faults of *Childe Harold*, may be mentioned the puerile affectation of its title ; and the occasional introduction of obsolete words into a poem essentially modern in its character. In this, as in Byron’s other works, the language is not always grammatical, nor are words always used in a correct meaning. Some passages are obscure from indistinctness of thought, and others from awkwardness of expression. In *Childe Harold* there is another fault, characteristic likewise of some of Lord Byron’s other writings. It is the want of coherence, of mutual relation of parts, and of general purpose in the poem. His transitions are singularly abrupt and harsh. The train of thought, or feeling, in which we had been indulging, is snapt without warning ; and something wholly foreign from it comes in succession. The associations, which introduce one part after another, seem often to be purely accidental. Subjects, which have no natural connexion, are thus brought together in strange confusion. The effect is almost as bewildering and unpleasant, as if a volume of sonnets were printed as a single work. It is a poem, which resembles the walls of some modern erection, composed in part of ancient marbles,—friezes, inscriptions,

and relievos,—placed without order. Lord Byron ‘told me,’ says Medwin, ‘that when he wrote, he neither knew nor cared what was coming next. This,’ adds Medwin, ‘is the true inspiration of the poet.’ The doctrine is comfortable for those who are aspiring to be poets; but, as yet, it is supported only by the practice of Lord Byron, and the authority of Captain Medwin.

Of the life led by Lord Byron in London, after the publication of the first two cantos of Childe Harold, there are statements and details enough in Dallas and Medwin. Courted by trifling and profligate men, and by fashionable and dissolute women, he indulged, without restraint of any sort, in the vices to which he was exposed. The view that is given of fashionable society in London, after every allowance which the case may require, is such as should make us thankful, that we, of the new world, are free from its folly and impurity. He who chooses to look for anything in that poem, may find a commentary upon the accounts of Dallas and Medwin, in some of the cantos of Don Juan. ‘I had the reputation,’ said Byron, ‘of being a great rake, and was a great dandy;’ and of this sort of reputation, he is reported to have been as vain, as of the fame of being a great poet. In January, 1815, he was married to Miss Millbank. The next year, he deserted his wife, and his native land. He subsequently inherited a fortune, as the husband of the lady whom he had abandoned;* and seems to have felt no hesitation about regarding the legal title which he had to it, as giving him a moral right to its possession. He continued to persecute Lady Byron after their separation. He dragged her before the world in his various works, for the sake of changing, if possible, the strong current of public sentiment, and directing it against her. He endeavored to represent himself as the one, who ‘had suffered things to be forgiven,’

* Medwin reports him to have said, on two different occasions, that when he paid back his wife’s portion, he added a sum of equal amount, viz. £10,000. This is stated to be false by Lord Byron’s friend, the Westminster Reviewer; who likewise contradicts another account of Byron’s generosity in voluntarily relinquishing the half of Lady Noel’s fortune after her death. According to Medwin, he said, ‘I might have claimed all the fortune for my life, if I had chosen to have done so.’ One may reasonably doubt whether all this incorrectness is to be charged on Medwin.

bitter wrongs ; but whose heavy curse should be forgiveness.* At the same time, with the disregard of consistency, which marks his writings and character, he announced that he married without love ; that even while he stood at the altar, the vision of another came over his mind, and changed his countenance ; and that while he ‘ spoke the fitting vows, he heard not his own words.’† Again, he represented his wife as teaching his child to hate him as a duty ;‡ and in his Don Juan, he directed against her all the power of ridicule, which he possessed.

The necessary effect of Lord Byron’s course of life was to deprave and harden his heart, and to deepen the natural gloom of his temper. His thoughts seem to have been, not unfrequently, directed to the subject of religion. He regarded its truths with doubt, with dread, and with defiance. Soon after his return from abroad, his professed infidelity led Mr Dallas to endeavor to produce an impression upon his mind favorable to Christianity, or to what the former regarded as Christianity. It is difficult, however, to award the praise which such an attempt might deserve, considering the deplorable manner in which it was executed. It is melancholy to know, that a professed defender of our religion addressed a mind like Lord Byron’s, with language and arguments such as follow.

‘ I compare such philosophers as you, and Hume, and Gibbon, (—I have put you into company that you are not ashamed of)—to mariners wrecked at sea, buffeting the waves for life, and at last carried by a current towards land, where, meeting with rugged and perpendicular rocks, they decide that it is impossible to land, and, though some of their companions point out a firm beach, exclaim—“ Deluded things ! there can be no beach, unless you melt down these tremendous rocks—no, our ship is wrecked, and to the bottom we must go—all we have to do is to swim on, till Fate overwhelms us.”—You do not deny the depravity of the human race—well, that is one step gained—it is allowing that we are cast away—it is, figuratively, our shipwreck. Behold us, then, all scattered upon the ocean, and *all* anxious to be saved—all, at least, willing

* See Childe Harold, Cant. IV. st. 135.

† See ‘The Dream.’

‡ ‘ And though dull hate as duty should be taught,’ &c. Childe Harold, Cant. III. st. 117.

to be on *terra firma*; the Humes, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, as well as the Newtons, the Lockes, the Johnsons, &c. The latter make for the beach; the former exhaust their strength about the rocks, and sink, declaring them insurmountable. The incarnation of a Deity! vicarious atonement! the innocent suffering for the guilty! the seeming inconsistencies of the Old Testament, and the discrepancies of the New! &c. &c.! are rocks which I am free to own are not easily melted down; but I am certain that they may be viewed from a point on the beach in less deterring forms, lifting their heads into the clouds indeed, yet adding sublimity to the prospect of the shores on which we have landed, and by no means impeding our progress upon it. In less metaphorical language, my lord, it appears to me, that freethinkers are generally more eager to strengthen their objections than solicitous for conviction; and prefer wandering into proud inferences, to pursuing the evidences of facts; so contrary to the example given to us in all judicial investigations, where testimony precedes reasoning, and is the ground of it. The corruption of human nature being self evident, it is very natural to inquire the cause of that corruption, and as natural to hope that there may be a remedy for it. The cause and the remedy have been stated.

'How are we to ascertain the truth of them? Not by arguing mathematically, but by first examining the proofs adduced; and if they are satisfactory, to use our reasoning powers, as far as they will go, to clear away the difficulties, which may attend them.' pp. 88—90.

It is easy to imagine, how 'such a philosopher' as Lord Byron, would be affected by such rhetoric and such reasoning. It tended, without doubt, more than anything else, which could have been written by a man of Mr Dallas's powers, to strengthen him in his skepticism. Mr Dallas proceeds to relate.

'Lord Byron noticed, indeed, what I had written, but in a very discouraging manner. He would have nothing to do with the subject,—we should all go down together, he said, "So," quoting St Paul, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die;"—he felt satisfied in his creed, for it was better to sleep than to wake.' p. 90.

Such as we have seen being the character of Lord Byron, it could not be expected, that his poetry would have much tendency to raise and improve mankind, much moral beauty, or much that could be agreeable to our higher and purer feelings. It has not. The energy of his passions, and his

intense egotism, made him a poet. They demanded for their expression the vehement and piercing tones, which are sometimes uttered in his verses. He excels in the exhibition of pride, resolution, obstinacy, and solitary self dependence. No one could express with more force the corroding reflections of a perverted and degraded mind; nor add to the bitterness with which he pours out his loathing of life, and what were regarded by him as its purposes. He puts forth the whole strength of his soul in giving a voice to fierce and wicked passions, in the agony of their self inflicted torment. There are few passages, for instance, in his poetry, more powerful than the confession of the Giaour.

Now nothing left to love or hate,
No more with hope or pride elate,
I'd rather be the thing that crawls
Most noxious o'er a dungeon's walls,
Than pass my dull, unvarying days,
Condemn'd to meditate and gaze.

Yet sometimes, with remorse, in vain
I wish she had not loved again.
She died—I dare not tell thee how;
But look—'tis written on my brow!
There read of Cain the curse and crime,
In characters unworn by time.

He died too in the battle broil.

* * * * *

I search'd, but vainly search'd, to find
The workings of a wounded mind;
Each feature of that sullen corse
Betray'd his rage, but no remorse.
Oh, what had Vengeance given to trace
Despair upon his dying face!
The late repentance of that hour,
When Penitence hath lost her power
To tear one terror from the grave,
And will not soothe, and cannot save.

And she was lost—and yet I breathed,
But not the breath of human life;
A serpent round my heart was wreathed,
And stung my every thought to strife.

Alike all time, abhorr'd all place,
Shuddering I shrunk from Nature's face,
Where every hue that charm'd before
The blackness of my bosom wore.
The rest thou dost already know,
And all my sins, and half my wo.

Tell me no more of fancy's gleam,
No, father no, 'twas not a dream ;
Alas ! the dreamer first must sleep,
I only watch'd, and wish'd to weep ;
But could not, for my burning brow
Throbb'd to the very brain as now :
I wish'd but for a single tear,
As something welcome, new, and dear,
I wish'd it then, I wish it still,
Despair is stronger than my will.
Waste not thine orison, despair
Is mightier than thy pious prayer ;
I would not, if I might, be blest,
I want no paradise, but rest.

A great part of what is most forcible in his poetry consists in the display of his own passions, indulged in imagination without restraint. Throughout almost the whole of it, there is an exhibition, direct or indirect, of his personal feelings and character, either such as they really were, or most commonly modified in such a manner, as seemed to him best adapted to give others that conception of him, which he wished them to entertain ; as of an individual, who, as he describes one of his impersonations of himself, his Lara,

—soared beyond, or sunk beneath,
The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,
And longed by good or ill to separate
Himself from all, who shared his mortal state.

The characteristics described, mark strongly all his higher poems, such as the last two cantos of Childe Harold, Manfred, the Corsair, and Lara. When the 'strong vigor' of his egotism was not 'working at the root,' his poetry is often imperfectly conceived and expressed, tame, extravagant, sometimes heavily elaborate, and sometimes employed about unfit subjects. Examples of one or another of these faults might

be quoted, from the first two cantos of Childe Harold, from that portion of the Giaour, which precedes the confession, the Bride of Abydos, the Siege of Corinth, Parasina, the Hebrew Melodies, and some of those productions of his latter years, which, not being remarkable for any extraordinary exhibition of depravity, even his name could not force into notice. Such passages, indeed, may be found in all his writings. The following are from the Siege of Corinth, neither one of the best, nor one of the worst of his poems.

There is a temple in ruin stands,
Fashion'd by long forgotten hands ;
Two or three columns, and many a stone,
Marble and granite, with grass o'ergrown !
Out upon Time ! it will leave no more
Of the things to come than the things before !
Out upon Time ! who for ever will leave
But enough of the past for the future to grieve
O'er that which hath been, and o'er that which must be ;
What we have seen our sons shall see ;
Remnants of things that have pass'd away,
Fragments of stone, rear'd by creatures of clay !

The tame description in the first four lines, the triteness and exaggeration of the sentiment which follows, the strange exclamation, ‘Out upon time,’ and the tripping versification, render the whole passage almost burlesque.

And he saw the lean dogs, beneath the wall,
Hold o'er the dead their carnival,
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb ;
They were too busy to bark at him !
From a Tartar's skull they had stripp'd the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh ;
And their white tusks crunch'd o'er the whiter skull
As it slipp'd through their jaws, when their edge grew dull,
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed.

* * * * *

The scalps were in the wild dog's maw,
The hair was tangled round his jaw.

If this style of writing, in which the disgusting and the loathsome are assumed as proper subjects for description, should become popular, and we have lately had much of it

both in poetry and prose, we may expect before long to be entertained, with striking poetical details of the symptoms and sufferings of the Elephantiasis or Plica Polonica.

The steeds are all bridled, and snort to the rein ;
Curved is each neck, and flowing each mane ;
White is the foam of their champ on the bit ;
The spears are uplifted ; the matches are lit ;
The cannon are pointed, and ready to roar,
And crush the wall they have crumbled before ;
Forms in his phalanx each Janizar ;
Alp at their head ; his right arm is bare,
So is the blade of his scimitar.

This, and some of the passages which follow it, have the air of being written in sport, as examples for a new treatise on the Bathos.

Nothing there, save death, was mute ;
Stroke, and thrust, and flash, and cry
For quarter, or for victory,
Mingle there with the volleying thunder,
Which makes the distant cities wonder
How the sounding battle goes,
If with them, or for their foes ;
If they must mourn, or may rejoice
In that annihilating voice,
Which pierces the deep hills through and through
With an echo dread and new ;
You might have heard it, on that day,
O'er Salamis and Megara ;
(We have heard the hearers say,)
Even unto Piræus bay.

There stood an old man—his hairs were white,
But his veteran arm was full of might ;
So gallantly bore he the brunt of the fray,
The dead before him, on that day,
In a semicircle lay.

To return, however, to Lord Byron's more powerful poetry, it may be observed, that though his feelings and passions were in their combination and general character, such as to repel the sympathy of the better part of mankind, yet there are passages of great power in which some personal emotion is expressed, without offence to moral sentiment.

Once more upon the waters ! yet once more !
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar !
Swift be their guidance, whereso'er it lead !
Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on ; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

There is something glorious in the energy, which can regard the ocean as a managed steed, welcome its roar, and abandon itself to the storm ; and the feeling which this is adapted to excite, is rendered deeper by the accompanying expression of suffering and solitariness.

The two last cantos of Childe Harold display much higher poetical powers, than the two preceding. Their author, likewise, has chosen to exhibit his character under a somewhat different and less unamiable aspect. There is more of moral feeling ; there is, sometimes, even an approach to religious sentiment.

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most ;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep ;—
All heaven and earth are still ; from the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain coast,
All is concentrated in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

The admiration and flattery which he had received, the court which had been paid him, the real kindness, he had experienced, the readiness of every one to allow his claims to their full extent, and to forget his offences, and the high rank which he had attained as a popular writer, had all contributed to soften the asperity of his passions, and to take off the edge of his misanthropy. At the same time, when in the full sunshine of favor, he had darkened his own prospects, he had, by his misconduct, separated himself from society and from his country, and become a just object of general reprobation. He had, through his evil passions, humbled himself even in the eye of the world. He could not but feel his

situation ; and he appears, likewise, to have felt something of compunction, and to have admitted the entrance of better and more serious thoughts, than those with which he had been familiar. It was not for one so circumstanced to assume a tone of defiance, and to talk, very broadly, of contemning his fellow men ; for society had passed on him a sentence of exile ; and he could not glory in what had become an involuntary separation. The world, however, was still wooing him back to its favor ; he was still ‘ Begged to be glad, entreated to aspire ;’ and to secure that favor, which was his life, he was stimulated to a more splendid exertion of his powers, and led to accommodate himself more to the moral sentiments of mankind. The last two cantos of Childe Harold, therefore, take precedence of his other works, and afford a fair example of his great powers, and of some of his great defects as a poet.

His real character, and his assumed poetical character, which was moulded upon the former, prevented him from feeling or expressing any very extended sympathy with his fellowmen. He could not be a disinterested sharer in their joys. He had no power of throwing a poetic charm over common scenes and objects, the common interests and hopes of life. He was as little able to compose *L'Allegro*, or *Il Penseroso*, as the *Analogy of Butler*. He professed to regard with contempt the ordinary purposes and passions of men, and those powers, which are displayed in their gratification and accomplishment. He felt no enthusiasm in contemplating the energy of high and self denying virtue. He disbelieved, or affected to disbelieve, its existence. Above all, he was destitute of that faith and those hopes, which connecting man, in intimate union, with the unseen and the infinite, raise him not less as an intellectual and imaginative, than as a moral, being ; and present him under those relations, through which alone he becomes an object of deep and permanent interest.

Some scenes, however, the gloomy character of Byron gave him power to conceive strongly ; and with some feelings, it enabled him to sympathise. The distant roar of cannon breaking upon the gaiety of the young and the beautiful, heard first in silence and suspense, and then calling away the devoted to battle and death ; the terror and agony of such a parting ; and the unavailing lamentation over those snatched

from life, when life is in its bloom and promise, were subjects suited to his temper and powers. The latter, accordingly, are displayed in all their force throughout that passage, which no one who has read it can forget, beginning,

There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry.

In his description of the sorrow of those who mourn for the dead, gloomy and striking images are accumulated, with a profusion unusual in his poetry ; for in general he has more of passion and strong conception, than of that power of mind, which apprehends resemblances and illustrations, imparting a moral type to material things.

They mourn, but smile at length ; and, smiling, mourn ;
The tree will wither long before it fall ;
The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn ;
The roof tree sinks, but moulders on the hall,
In massy hoariness ; the ruin'd wall
Stands when its wind worn battlements are gone ;
The bars survive the captive they enthral ;
The day drags through though storms keep out the sun ;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on ;

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies ; and makes
A thousand images of one that was,
The same, and still the more, the more it breaks ;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
Living in shatter'd guise, and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

It was in the same spirit, and with equal power, that he had already described the death of Lara, and the agony of Kaled.

A breathing but devoted warrior lay ;
'Twas Lara bleeding fast from life away.
His follower once, and now his only guide,
Kneels Kaled watchful o'er his welling side,
And with his scarf would staunch the tides that rush,
With each convulsion, in a blacker gush ;

And then, as his faint breathing waxes low,
In feebler, not less fatal trickling flow ;
He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,
And merely adds another throb to pain.
He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page,
Who nothing fears, nor feels, nor heeds, nor sees,
Save that damp brow which rests upon his knees ;
Save that pale aspect, where the eye, though dim,
Held all the light that shone on earth for him.

That deep sense of the quietness, beauty, and still sublimity of nature, which is professed so strongly in the last two cantos of Childe Harold, seems rather assumed than real. It does not appear to be, as their author professes, a true 'love,' if such may exist, 'of earth only for its earthly sake ;' but rather a factitious sentiment, intended to strengthen, by contrast, the impression which he wished to give of his indisposition for human converse. He would have it thought, that he was so separated in character from his fellowmen, that though he 'had filed' (that is, defiled) 'his mind,' and brought it nearer to their level, still his soul could not bear to hold communion with them, and fled from their intercourse to the solitudes of nature. 'To me,' he tells us,

'High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture ;'

though, in fact, they were his chosen places of residence. Regarded in any other light, the sentiment of which we are speaking was inconsistent with his character. We accordingly find that much of the language, in which it is expressed, is misty and unmeaning, artificial and extravagant.

Ye stars ! that are the poetry of heaven !
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you ; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

No one, whose mind was really elevated and purified by the solemn grandeur of a midnight sky, would think of expressing his feelings by an allusion to the forgotten folly of astrology, or to the metaphorical uses of the word, star. To the latter, the last line may be conjectured to refer ; but one can hardly feel certain, that he has divined its meaning.

But in his descriptions of the loveliness of nature, there is sometimes great beauty.

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contained no tomb,—
And glowing into day ; we may resume
The march of our existence.

There are few passages in poetry more richly colored than the following.

The Moon is up, and yet it is not night—
Sunset divides the sky with her—a sea
Of glory streams along the Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountains ; Heaven is free
From clouds, but of all colors seems to be
Melted to one vast Iris of the West,
Where the Day joins the past Eternity ;
While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest !

A single star is at her side, and reigns
With her o'er half the lovely heaven ; but still
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains
Roll'd o'er the peak of the far Rhætian hill,
As Day and Night contending were, until
Nature reclaim'd her order ;—gently flows
The deep dyed Brenta, where their hues instil
The odorous purple of a new born rose,
Which streams upon her stream, and glass'd within it glows,

Fill'd with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
Comes down upon the waters ; all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse ;
And now they change ; a paler shadow strews
Its mantle o'er the mountains ; parting day

Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray.

Even in this passage, however, the construction is awkward and embarrassing, and the simile of a dying dolphin is disagreeable, both from its triteness, and from its want of moral harmony with the scene described.

But Byron's descriptions of nature, though they are gemed with brilliant expressions, yet, taken each as a whole, are, for the most part, unsatisfactory and faulty. They have often the air of being written as a task. There is in his pictures, a want of clearness, of truth, and of a suitable disposition of the parts to each other. The description neither conveys distinct images of what is visible, nor a just impression of the emotions, which the scene is adapted to produce. There is sometimes an exaggeration of false sentiment, which shows a want of true perception and of natural feeling ; as for instance in the passage about 'Clarens, sweet Clarens,' which was intended to be so very sweet ; but in writing which the author mistook extravagance, and want of meaning for poetry ; the key note of the whole being found in the following words—

Thy air is the young breath of passionate thought ;
Thy trees take root in love.

The same want of real harmony of mind with the works of nature appears in his description of the cataract of Velino.

The roar of waters !—from the headlong height,
Velino cleaves the wave worn precipice ;
The fall of waters ! rapid as the light,
The flashing mass foams, shaking the abyss ;
The hell of waters ! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture ; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon, curls round the rocks of jet,
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set.

In aiming at sublimity, Byron here produces only conceptions of disgust and horror. He applies images of bodily torture, and muscular force and convulsion, to a subject to which they are wholly unsuitable. The waters of a cataract

are compared to living beings in an agony of pain. There is little external resemblance between their struggles, and the overwhelming rush of a torrent ; and none between the feelings, which the one spectacle and the other are adapted to produce. The offensiveness of the passage is in some degree aggravated by the confusion of literal and metaphorical language, and by representing the waters as in a cold sweat.

Following those just quoted, there are, however, some lines which may remind one of the rich metaphorical language of Shakspeare. The spray of the torrent,

With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
Is an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all one emerald.

These lines, however, are in no accordance with what precedes or follows. The turmoil of description is continued through several stanzas ; but the real tameness of feeling, which runs through the whole, betrays itself in the concluding line of one of them ;

Look back !
Lo ! where it comes like an eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its tract,
Charming the eye with dread,—a matchless cataract.

A passage relating to the Appenines, immediately follows the description of the cataract of Velino. It consists, with one exception, in a not very forcible dilation of the thought, that the author would have admired these mountains more, if he had not beheld others of greater sublimity. The following is a part—

I have looked on Ida with a Trojan's eye,
Athos, Olympus, Ætna, Atlas, made
These hills seem things of lesser dignity.

The exception referred to, is a figure in the highest degree picturesque ; ‘ lone Soracte’s height’

————— from out the plain,
Heaves like a long swept wave about to break,
And [which] on the curl hangs pausing.

The following is another specimen of Byron's powers of description, from *Manfred*.

It is not noon—the sunbow's rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the *Apocalypse*.

This passage, which has been admired, would be finer, if it were more intelligible. It is often easy to discover a writer's meaning, even where he does not express it correctly; but this is not the case with the lines before us. What is said is, that the sunbow's rays roll the waving column, and fling its lines of foaming light along; what was intended to be said, we cannot conjecture. It is clear, however, that the waterfall is first described as a column of sheeted silver arched by a rainbow; and, afterwards, compared to the

Pale courser's tail,
The giant steed [steed's], to be bestrode by Death.

But this does not seem to be the language of an accurate observer of nature. It may be doubted, whether the appearances supposed can coexist at the same point of view. At a distance from a waterfall, where its white foam, in apparently retarded motion, and spreading as it descends, is alone visible, the comparison may be admitted; but at such a distance, we see nothing of rainbows, or of sheeted silver, glittering in the sunbeams.

The effect of what is beautiful and grand in nature, depends so much upon the purest moral and religious associations, that he whose mind is destitute of these, can have but little sensibility to her power. It is nature, as animated by the imagination, and endued with moral life; it is nature, as peopled with real and imaginary inhabitants, whose joys and interests are blended with the visible scene before us; it is nature, as the work of God, penetrating us with a feeling of his love, and connecting us with his infinity; it is nature in her eternal magnificence, calling up images of what is past and what

is to come, and raising us above the passions of the present hour ; it is nature thus contemplated, and thus acting upon us, that inspires the poet, and elevates the philosopher. There is no harmony between her and the misanthropist, the disbeliever in virtue, the man who is the slave of his lusts, or haunted by remorse, or harassed by bitter and angry passions ; him who can talk of the ‘ skies’ as ‘ raining plagues on men like dew.’ It was with a very different character from that of Byron, that another poet thus expressed himself ; ‘ I am growing fit, I hope, for a better world, of which the light of the sun is but a shadow ; for I doubt not but God’s works here are what come nearest to his works there ; and that a true relish of the beauties of nature is the most easy preparation, and gentlest transition to an enjoyment of those of heaven.’* The want of real feeling, in many of the descriptions of Byron, is often not merely a deficiency, but makes itself felt as the cause of artificial sentiment, an unnatural straining after effect, and harsh and incongruous images.

But he has great vividness of conception, and great power of expression ; and where the aspects of nature corresponded to the gloom and storminess of his own mind, there is sometimes a burst of poetry, which will never be excelled. The thunder storm among the Alps—every one recollects it.

The sky is changed !—and such a change ! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman ! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder ! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud !

Nothing can be more magnificent. There is here no imperfect personification. The mastery of the poet’s spell is complete ; and the thunder and the mountains are alive.

We may feel more fully the wonderful power of this passage, by comparing it with another description of the same

* This passage is from a letter of Pope to Miss M. Blount ; one of those letters on which Bowles has founded a gross attack upon the morals of that eminent man. The defect of good sense, in Mr Bowles’ reasoning on this subject, is almost as remarkable as his strange malignity against the dead.

kind, which has been, perhaps, more celebrated than any other, that of Virgil, in his first *Georgic*.

Ipse Pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, coruscâ
Fulmina molitur dextrâ ; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit ; fugere feræ ; et mortalia corda
Per gentes humilis stravit pavor ; ille flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit ; ingeminant austri et densissimus imber ;
Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc littora, plangunt.*

It may be curious to observe, that the superiority of the former passage arises, in part, from its greater conformity to nature. The thunder storm of Virgil, by which the whole earth is shaken, and mortal hearts prostrated with fear through the nations, is far too extensive and powerful in its effects. His description does not give us that feeling of reality, for the want of which no poetical language can compensate. In addition to this, Virgil's sole agent is Jupiter; and we do not perceive why he acts. There is no moral character connected with the display of what may be called his physical power. The conception, for anything which appears, may be that of a capricious tyrant. But in the verses of Byron, the phenomena of nature are indued with forms of life, fully corresponding to the powerful impressions, which they are adapted to produce.

In the passage from Byron, it is true, that 'the light of a dark eye in woman,' is out of place, not being in accordance with the gigantic sublimity and force of the images, among which it is introduced. The description, likewise, is continued through another stanza of inferior merit, and which

* Of such a passage, it is vain to attempt to give a satisfactory translation. The following is somewhat more literal than any other we have seen.

Amid a night of storms, the Almighty Sire
Wields the fierce thunder, his right arm on fire ;
The huge earth trembles ; the wild beasts have fled ;
Throughout the nations, men are bowed with dread.
He, with his flaming dart, meanwhile strikes down
The crest of Rhodope, or Athos' crown,
Or the Ceraunian summits. The deep roar
Of wind and rain redoubles. On the shore,
The raving billows dash with ceaseless sound,
And groaning forests answer far around.

concludes with an imagination, than which there is scarcely anything more burlesque in his *Beppo* or *Don Juan*—

—and now the glee

Of the loud hills shakes with their mountain mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

The disproportion and incongruity between the powers of Byron's mind, and especially the want of strong moral sentiment, corresponding to and sustaining the vigor of his conceptions, appear equally in other passages of his writings, as in his descriptions of nature. His force is sometimes that of a blind Cyclops, aimless and purposeless. Without religious faith, regarding himself and others as mere beings of this world, taking pleasure in representing himself as degraded and miserable, and his fellowmen as creatures with whom he was unwilling to be ranked, he excluded from his poetry all the infinite variety of thoughts and feelings, which belong to the higher part of our nature. He did not recognise those great truths, with which all just sentiments are connected. In his mind, the source of intellectual day was darkened, and he perceived not the beautiful coloring, and the ever varying lights and shadows, which it spreads over the objects of thought and imagination. The skepticism of a depraved heart is not inconsistent with the vehement expression of strong passions, or of deep gloom ; but it is inconsistent with all generous and invigorating purposes and sentiments, and with all those emotions, which are most sublime and ennobling. The poetry of Byron is the poetry of earth only ; where it is not, as in his *Cain*, the poetry of hell. His mind, strongly acted upon by a few objects, reacted strongly upon them. But the sphere within which his intellect exerted itself was narrow. Scarcely any writer has so much of what is essentially repetition. Every one begins to grow weary at last of being told of his misanthropy and his misery, his passions, and his pride, the worthlessness of man and the worthlessness of life.

From the causes which have been mentioned, there is often a striking contrast between the grandeur of Byron's conceptions, and the poverty and deadness of the sentiment, with which they are connected. The latter resembles some worthless corpse, lying in state, surrounded by the insignia

of nobility, and with banners hanging over it. Let us take, for example, one of his most striking passages.

Oh Rome ! my country ! city of the soul !
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires ! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.
What are our woes and sufferance ? Come and see
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye !
Whose agonies are evils of a day—
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

The Niobe of nations ! there she stands,
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless wo ;
An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago ;
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now ;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers ; dost thou flow,
Old Tiber ! through a marble wilderness ?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

There is nothing in poetry more colossal and imposing, than some of the expressions in this passage—‘Lone mother of dead empires’—

The Niobe of nations ! there she stands,
Childless and crownless.

In what follows, images of desolated greatness are brought before us with powerful effect—

The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now ;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers ; dost thou flow,
Old Tiber ! through a marble wilderness ?

What, then, is the defect of this passage ? We answer, the unnatural and false sentiment, which is arrayed with all this magnificence. Rome is personified, and represented as standing overwhelmed with her voiceless wo ; and we are called upon, in contemplating the misery felt by this personification, to repress the expression of our own sufferings. The figure itself is carried too far, and its effect weakened, when the imagination of distress is distinctly introduced. But the thought becomes altogether incongruous, when this imaginary distress is applied to the moral purpose of enforcing patience

upon those, whose agonies are represented as nothing in comparison, being but the evils of a day. Strong sympathy, even with the real sufferings of those who have lived during past ages, is not the feeling, which a contemplation of the ruins of human glory is naturally adapted to produce. With the false sentiment, which runs through the passage, is connected the tame extravagance of the concluding apostrophe to the Tiber—

Rise with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

In the following stanza, Rome is still the subject.

The double night of ages, and of her,
Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap*
All round us ; we but feel our way to err ;
The ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap ;
But Rome is as the desert, where we steer,
Stumbling o'er recollections ; now we clap
Our hands, and cry 'Eureka?' it is clear—
When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

Here, again, we have, as it were, an Egyptian mausoleum for the remains of a deified animal. The rich poetical language rather conceals than expresses the meaning, which, when discovered, is nothing more, than that the antiquaries are in doubt about the original names and purposes of some of the ruins of Rome ; that it is a question, for instance, whether the remains of a portico belonged to a Temple of Mars, or a Basilic of Antoninus Pius. This is not a fact to be announced with such elaborate solemnity.

In some passages, the poverty of sentiment is such, that there is only the shadow of a thought ; nothing real and palpable.

The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust
The iron crown of laurel's mimic'd leaves ;
Nor was the ominous element unjust,
For the true laurel-wreath which Glory weaves
Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,
And the false semblance but disgraced his brow ;
Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
Know, that the lightning sanctifies below
Whate'er it strikes ; yon head is doubly sacred now.

* Wraps is required by grammar.

The semblance of meaning in this passage must disappear in any attempt to express it in prose. We can only arrange the thoughts in succession. ‘It was not unjust in the lightning, which is ominous, to strike the iron crown from the bust of Ariosto, for Ariosto himself was entitled, metaphorically speaking, to a laurel crown ; and there is a fable, that the laurel is not struck by lightning. Therefore the crown on his bust, being only made of metal, in imitation of laurel, disgraced it. But if the superstitious are still troubled, it may be added, that it was the custom of the ancients to consecrate to the gods what had been struck with lightning, therefore the bust of Ariosto is now doubly sacred.’ The want of any proper relation between the thoughts thus forced together, renders the whole passage unmeaning.

In the expression of abstract sentiment, in all which might imply a philosophical spirit, or just and comprehensive habits of thinking, Byron is equally deficient. He had no fixed principles of belief or action ; and, in consequence, there is much opposition and incongruity of opinion and feeling, expressed throughout his works. There is scarcely any subject on which he appears to have thought consistently or correctly. It may be doubted, whether there is a single passage in his writings, adapted to fix itself in the memory, as a striking expression of any general truth. The following is one of his most labored efforts.

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane ; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire ;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest ; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion ; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul’s secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool ;

Envied, yet how unenviable ! what stings
Are theirs ! One breast laid open were a school,
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule ;

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die ;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

He who ascends to mountain tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow ;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

The concluding simile is trite. The whole sense of the passage is, that those who act powerfully upon their fellow-men are all governed but by one feeling, a feverish restlessness, which leads them to aspire to what is unlawful ; that they are all sources of mischief to others, and objects of their hate ; and that they are all peculiarly unhappy themselves. The Edinburgh reviewer entered into a formal refutation of the latter doctrine. The other positions do not seem to be more profound or tenable.

In the delineation of his heroes, either in narrative or dramatic poetry, Byron is not successful. They are, in general, modifications of his poetical image of his own character ; combinations, a little varied, of the same elementary passions. In tracing, however, their resemblance to his imagination of himself, we must take into account the gradual changes of his mind and heart. In his latter years, the fire of his passions was smouldering ; he was becoming a grosser sensualist ; his feelings had lost their keenness ; after his fashion, he speculated more and imagined less. Thus Childe Harold was the

ideal picture of his youth, and Sardanapalus was drawn from the same character, when withered and decaying. The first, in his predominant features, is a misanthropist, sated with pleasure, yet perceiving no other good ; the last, a voluptuary, who has learnt to philosophise, and is only indifferent to everything but pleasure. Byron was a magician, without the art of evoking other spirits, but possessing, like Kehama, the power of multiplying himself. But when the inconsistencies of his own fluctuating passions were fixed, and exaggerated, and made to coexist as permanent, active qualities in his poetical creations, imaginary characters were produced, such as nature never knew. There is a moral absurdity in the confusion of qualities brought together. In his Corsair, for instance, he exhibits a pirate, who has ‘a laughing devil in his sneer,’ and whose frown of hatred withered all hope of mercy, but whose strongest feeling, at the same time, is the purest and most tender affection. His sense of honor is so exquisite, that he prefers being impaled himself to destroying an enemy while asleep, whose life, while awake, he had just before assaulted in the character of a spy. The inconsistency admits of no aggravation ; or it might be added, that in the continuation of the same story, this highminded pirate is guilty of cowardly assassination. The moral painting in this picture of character, is as if one were to represent tender and beautiful flowers springing up among the ashes and scoriæ, which form the crater of a volcano. Where there is less of incongruity in the qualities assigned by Byron to his heroes, there is at least some unnatural extravagance, irreconcilable with moral probability. The consequence is, that no clear and well defined impression of character is left upon the mind. As individuals, they possess no power over our sympathy. They are only shadowy and monstrous shapes of things, which never were, nor can be.

In his presentations of female character, there is less inconsistency, but they, likewise, are formed after one model. They are very beautiful, passionately fond, full of simplicity, tenderness, and constancy. This is a very interesting combination of qualities, which is marred only by one uniform defect. They have neither good sense, nor good taste, in selecting the objects of their affection. They are all possessed with the sentiment, expressed in one of Moore’s songs—

'I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in thy heart,
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.'

Byron's writings have throughout a personal reference ; and of such affection he could conceive himself the object.

Some of the most striking characteristics of his poetry belong rather to the age, than to the individual. It is, or it assumes to be, the expression of strong feeling and passion. But poetry had been growing too mechanical an art. There was a tendency to address, not so much the universal feelings of men, as the artificial taste of connoisseurs. It had been too much confined to merely arbitrary rules. Its language was becoming vague, unmeaning, traditional. It abounded in idle epithets, loosely applied. It was overrun with conventional figures, conceptions, and modes of thought, which had long ceased to correspond to anything really existing in men's hearts and minds, and which have now become wholly obsolete. The muse was still invoked, as she was by Homer, three thousand years ago ; men thought that they wrote of love, when they talked about Venus and Cupid, wounds, flames, and darts ; the heathen mythology still flourished in English verse ; heroes were arrayed in rhyme, in ancient costume and armor ; and the shepherds and shepherdesses of the golden days were seen in vision in the streets of London. Much that was admired in its day, as the heroic plays of Dryden, the Henry and Emma of Prior, the pastorals of Shenstone, and, we must add, of Pope, the love elegies of Hammond, and in fact a great part of the amatory poetry in our language, had but little relation to human passions and feelings, but seemed to be adapted to some strange, grotesque, and often very disagreeable race of beings, among whom the author had transferred himself from the living world around him. These remarks do not refer to any particular school of poets, and still less to all the poets of any particular period ; but to certain prevailing faults in poetry, which had gone unchecked for a considerable time, and which were removing it, farther and farther, from its true character. The decrepitude of the artificial style, which has been described, appears in the writings of Hayley, and some other poets of his day ; and the false taste, which had been nourished, is proved by the temporary popularity which these writers attained. Hayley was for a time the greatest living poet of England.

But at the very period when poetry had become most artificial and insipid, the intellectual powers of men had begun to display themselves in action and speculation, with a force, which seemed to have been accumulating during a period of repose. One of those eras had commenced, which mark the history of mankind. The impulse was given in our country, where the last half century has been a period of almost uninterrupted improvement. In Europe, it has been a season of terrible contests and destruction ; of crimes and madness, yet of high qualities and great virtues ; of the overturn and reestablishment of thrones ; of strong passions, good and bad, in array against each other ; of bold speculations, true and false, conflicting with the most established and authoritative prejudices ; and of the natural feelings and desires of men, struggling against artificial and oppressive forms of society. But there too much has been gained. Considering the human character under its most favorable aspect, we may say, that man has become a being of bolder purposes, of wider views, of higher principles of action, more consistent and intrepid in his reasonings, more energetic in his will, more tender, generous, and sincere in his affections.

But poetry of the kind that has been spoken of, was not suited to the character of such an age. There was a demand for something more true, natural, and vigorous. There was a still stronger demand for something more exciting and passionate. The craving for poetry of the latter character was so strong, that the most rude and extravagant attempts were for a time received with favor. The writers of the Della Cruscan school, now never mentioned but by way of ridicule, enjoyed a temporary blaze of popularity in England ; and the forgotten book, *The British Album*, in which some of their verses were collected, was republished and extensively circulated in this country, at a time when the reprinting of a literary work was a rare event. Under the influences described, a new spirit has been communicated to English literature, conformed to the character of the age. All that was merely arbitrary, traditional, and factitious, has fallen into contempt. So far the change has been well. But the unalterable principles of taste, founded in the nature of man, and the eternal truths of morality and religion, have, likewise, been neglected or outraged, as antiquated prejudices. By

some writers, the highest excellence has been attained, in accordance with the improved character of man. By others, the vilest and grossest passions, the worst part of human nature, has been addressed without reserve. Some have enlarged the sphere of our imagination and feelings, conducting us to new prospects,—*avia Pieridum loca, nullius ante trita solo.* Others, for the sake of producing some effect, have hazarded anything, however strange and offensive. There have been writers, who appeared to think, that there is no proper distinction of our emotions into agreeable and disagreeable; and that if their readers were but strongly moved it was enough; no matter whether with simply painful sympathy, or disgust, or horror. Others, of great genius, like Wordsworth, in their dislike of the artificial style of poetry, have seemed to fancy that everything natural must be pleasing; and that he, who, even in the most common language, should give an account of his feelings, however trifling, or however accidental in their origin, must interest the feelings of his readers. They have even caricatured the simplicity of nature. We have had popular writers of every class, from Edgeworth, and Scott, and the author of Thalaba, down to the riotous swaggerers, who furnish the rank extravagances of Blackwood's magazine. But there is no writer, whose works have corresponded more than those of Byron, to the powerful, energetic, and passionate character of the times, have been more deeply stamped with the impression of its vices, or have been more adapted to satisfy the morbid appetite, which has existed, for every kind of excitement. This has been one of the accidental causes of his extraordinary popularity.

Another cause, contributing much to the great interest, which has been felt in his works, is their egotism. Though they do not bear the form, they have, in fact, the character of 'Confessions.' But he, who writes of himself and his own emotions, is secure of readers. By a natural delusion, it seems as if the author were giving his confidence to us individually, and we are ready to make him a return of our sympathy and regard. We are interested both in the writer, and in the knowledge which we fancy he may communicate. We are curious to know the inward structure and motions of another human mind, the secrets of another heart like our own. He may tell us, as it seems, what we could not, or

dared not tell ourselves. But, in truth, such intimate knowledge of another mind is not to be derived from a confidence, which we share only in common with all the rest of the world. It is not humility, but vanity, which prompts the writers of confessions. They may acknowledge much evil of themselves, for this acknowledgment, instead of diminishing the interest of their readers, may contribute to enhance it. There are many sentiments, of which men delight to be the objects, besides approbation ; and some of them are rather increased than weakened by vices and defects of character. Such writers may, even with Rousseau and Byron, avow actions or qualities, which in themselves are merely revolting, for this avowal may be accompanied with the implication, that their faults are intimately connected with excellences altogether peculiar ; and in fact, are only marks of a moral idiosyncrasy, by which the individual is distinguished from, and raised above other men. Vices may even be feigned or exaggerated, as we find in real life, for the sake of bringing out some favorite trait of character in bolder relief ; or of giving stronger solicitude to the sympathy, which has been excited by other qualities. But whatever is told, the simple truth is not told. The author conforms his accounts, and his expressions of feeling, to some imaginary conception of himself, which he secretly admires, and fancies others will admire. The popularity, therefore, of such writings, is not lasting. In a little time, men find that they have been deceived, and cheated out of their sympathy and admiration. The author betrays himself in his own writings ; the facts of his life, as they are more known and attended to, are perceived to be inconsistent with his exhibition of himself ; and some Grimm, some Marmontel, or some Medwin, some enemy or some friend, springs up to give the literal prose story of what had appeared only in poetical and picturesque guise. Thus the true character of the individual gradually displaces his theatrical personation of himself. In the age after that in which it is written, his book, like the Confessions of Rousseau, ceases to be an object of feeling and enthusiasm. Its vitality is gone, and it remains only as a subject of moral analysis to the student of human nature. The life and writings of Byron corresponded less with each other, than those of Rousseau ; and in the poetry of the former, there are grosser incongruities, than

in the prose of the latter. Byron was continually calling upon men in the most moving language, to inform them, that he did not wish for their notice or concern ; he was pouring out unremitting wailings, and avowing, at the same time, that he had learnt, with stern resolution, to suffer in solitude and silence ; he was professing his dislike and contempt of the world in constant efforts to secure its admiration and favor.

That he truly suffered, from a gloomy temperament, and from the natural effects of his vices, there can be no doubt. But this is vulgar misery, very different from that ‘sublime sadness, breathed from the mysteries of our mortal existence,’* with which his more enthusiastic admirers thought him to be possessed. As he lived longer, his feelings became more callous, and he acquired more of selfish recklessness. Every one now knows, that Lord Byron, as a man, was a different personage from the Lord Byron of his own poetry. The accounts of his life and his conversations, the levity of his prose writings, and the last employment of his days, his *Don Juan*, have left few believers in his sublime and mysterious melancholy.

Lord Byron’s course of life, while on the continent, after leaving England, answered to that which he before led. His last mistress was a married woman, the daughter of an Italian count, whose family, with an insensibility to infamy, not, we hope, to be found out of Italy, did not feel the connexion as disgraceful. The character of the few companions with whom he principally associated, is well known. He produced various works, some of which cannot be spoken of with too severe reprobation ; while others had not striking qualities of any kind, sufficient to attract much notice. He perceived that his fame was sinking under him, that he was beginning to be regarded with but little of poetical enthusiasm, and that he had outraged too far the moral sentiments of mankind. He felt this state of things with abundant irritability, which he expressed in verses as spirited as the following,—the only extract we shall give from his *Don Juan*.

Dogs or men ! (for I flatter you in saying
That ye are dogs—your betters far) ye may
Read, or read not, what I am now essaying,
To show ye what ye are in every way.

* Edinburgh Review, vol. 30. p. 98. Am. Ed.

As little as the moon stops for the baying
Of wolves, will the bright muse withdraw one ray
From out her skies—then howl your idle wrath !
While she still silvers o'er your gloomy path.

Under such circumstances, weary of life, disgusted with his pursuits, sensible that he had wantonly perverted his extraordinary powers, and become an object of universal disapprobation ; yet desirous, as ever, of being distinguished by the admiration of the world, he was led to change the scene, and undertake his expedition to Greece. The romance of his admirers was revived for a time by this event. But no one, we suppose, imagines that he rendered, or was capable of rendering, any important services to the cause of that country. If the Greeks are, as we hope, to recover their freedom, it may be well for their posterity, that he had not the power. The examples of those distinguished in the history of a nation, as its benefactors, are likely to have much influence upon the national character. Our own country has, in that respect, been peculiarly fortunate. It would have been unhappy for Greece, if Lord Byron had been her Lafayette.

There is a passage in Medwin's work, which is striking; both from the scene described, and from the view which it gives of Lord Byron's desertion during his residence in Italy ; and still more from the light, which it throws upon the state of his feelings and character. The writer himself is apparently unconscious of what he has thus contributed to bring before us. Shelley, who seems to have been almost domesticated with Lord Byron, was drowned by the upsetting of an open boat. His body was found fifteen days afterwards. The following is the relation of Medwin.

' 18th August, 1822.—On the occasion of Shelley's melancholy fate I revisited Pisa, and on the day of my arrival learnt that Lord Byron was gone to the seashore, to assist in performing the last offices to his friend. We came to a spot marked by an old and withered trunk of a fir tree ; and near it, on the beach, stood a solitary hut covered with reeds. The situation was well calculated for a poet's grave. A few weeks before I had ridden with him and Lord Byron to this very spot, which I afterwards visited more than once. In front was a magnificent extent of the blue and windless Mediterranean, with the Isles of Elba and Gorgona,—Lord Byron's yacht at anchor in the offing ; on the other side an

almost boundless extent of sandy wilderness, uncultivated and uninhabited, here and there interspersed in tufts with underwood curved by the sea breeze, and stunted by the barren and dry nature of the soil in which it grew. At equal distances along the coast stood high square towers, for the double purpose of guarding the coast from smuggling, and enforcing the quarantine laws. This view was bounded by an immense extent of the Italian Alps, which are here particularly picturesque from their volcanic and manifold appearances, and which being composed of white marble, give their summits the resemblance of snow.

‘ As a foreground to this picture appeared as extraordinary a group. Lord Byron and Trelawney were seen standing over the burning pile, with some of the soldiers of the guard ; and Leigh Hunt, whose feelings and nerves could not carry him through the scene of horror, lying back in the carriage, the four post horses ready to drop with the intensity of the noonday sun. The stillness of all around was yet more felt by the shrill scream of a solitary curlew, which, perhaps, attracted by the body, wheeled in such narrow circles round the pile, that it might have been struck with the hand, and was so fearless that it could not be driven away. Looking at the corpse, Lord Byron said,

“ ‘ Why, that old black silk handkerchief retains its form better than that human body !’ ”

‘ Scarcely was the ceremony concluded, when Lord Byron, agitated by the spectacle he had witnessed, tried to dissipate, in some degree, the impression of it by his favorite recreation. He took off his clothes, therefore, and swam off to his yacht, which was riding a few miles distant.’ * * *

‘ The next morning he was perfectly recovered. When I called, I found him sitting in the garden under the shade of some orange trees, with the Countess. They are now always together, and he is become quite domestic. He calls her *Piccinina*, and bestows on her all the pretty diminutive epithets that are so sweet in Italian. His kindness and attention to the Guiccioli have been invariable.’ pp. 178—186.

The bad taste of the execution does not much injure the effect of this picture. Misery produces strange companionship. Lord Byron, attending the funeral of one of his few associates, who was still more an outcast from society than himself ; the gloomy circumstances of Shelley’s death ; the solitude of the scene ; the commencement of decay in the body, still clothed in the dress worn while in life ; Leigh Hunt dissolved in sentimental tears in the back ground, and

Byron himself endeavoring to escape from all thought, braving the melancholy, which must have forced itself upon him ; and, the next morning, found ‘ quite domestic’ with the wife of another man, who was his mistress.

A few months before the event mentioned in the last extract, Lord Byron received a letter from a Mr Sheppard. It contained a prayer of intercession for him, written in the year 1814, by Mrs Sheppard, which her husband had discovered among her papers, more than two years after her death. This lady was not personally acquainted with Lord Byron ; she had only seen him, and had been interested like the rest of the world in his poetry. The circumstances were adapted to affect any one. Lord Byron was touched at once through his vanity and his better feelings. His reply to Mr Sheppard, defective as it is in sentiment and reasoning, is more creditable to him in a moral point of view, than any other composition of his which has been published. We will give it entire.*

‘Pisa, December 8, 1821.

‘SIR,—I have received your letter.—I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite sure that it was intended for me, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances which you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomsoever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure, which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say *pleasure*, because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanor of the excellent person whom, I trust, that you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues, and her pure and unpretending piety. Her last moments were particularly striking ; and I do not know, that in the course of reading the story of mankind, and still less in my observations upon the existing portion, I ever met with anything so unostentatiously beautiful ! Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter, and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an

* It was originally published in a work entitled *Thoughts chiefly designed as a Preparative or Persuasive to private Devotion*, by John Sheppard. This book we have not seen ; but copy the above from the English Monthly Repository, No. 229.

exalted hope through life, without disappointment, since (at the worst for them) ‘out of nothing, nothing can arise,’ not even sorrow ! But a man’s creed does not depend upon himself. Who can say, I *will* believe this, that, or the other, and least of all that which he least can comprehend ? I have, however, observed, that those who have begun life with extreme faith, have in the end greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clarke, (who ended as an Arian,) Bayle and Gibbon, (once a Catholic,) and some others ; while, on the other hand, nothing is more common than for the early skeptic to end in a firm belief, like Maupertuis and Henry Kirke White. But my business is to acknowledge your letter, and not to make a dissertation. I am obliged to you for your good wishes, and more than obliged by *the extract* from the papers of the beloved object, whose qualities you have so well described in a few words. I can assure you that all the same, that ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest, which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me at least the justice to suppose that—

Video meliora proboque,

however the *deteriora sequor* may have been applied to my conduct. I have the honor to be your obliged and obedient servant,
‘BYRON.’

It is melancholy to think of the debasement and inconsistencies of such a mind as Lord Byron’s, a mind with such capacities for moral and intellectual excellence. With how much deeper feeling, might he have adopted the words of a less gifted poet—

O gracious God ! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of Poesy ?
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use.

Before the date of the letter just quoted, he had composed his Cain ; and, previously even to that work, he had abandoned himself, in his Don Juan, to a course of writing, which left nothing to be hoped.

Of these works we shall say but little. The world, as has been already remarked, had begun to grow weary of Byron’s

monotonous wretchedness ; the dark cloud which had enveloped him was dispersing, and no longer hid from view the form and lineaments of a man like other men ; the romantic conceptions, which had been entertained concerning him, were assuming a tinge of the ridiculous ; his life had been such, and his character had become so deeply marked and disfigured, that much of his former style of sentiment was too obviously incongruous with either ; and his powers seem to have been weakened, both by the moral and physical effects of his vices. Their influence tended also to prevent that confidence in the sympathy of others, which was necessary to the successful exertion of his genius. But he lived in the eyes of men, and their gaze was still to be fixed upon himself in some way or another. If he could not be the first of poets, he could be the most unprincipled and the most daring. It was in this state of mind, that he produced his *Don Juan* and his *Cain*, and some of the other works of his later years.

His thorough admirers have praised even these. But unless an age of deeper darkness and evil, than has yet been known, is about to settle upon the world, the prevailing sentiments concerning them will soon silence all dissentient voices. His *Cain* is a poem which has little in it, that is dramatic, except its external form. It is an attack upon the goodness of God, on the ground of the existence of evil. It represents him as the tyrant of the universe, delighting in the parasitical praises of his meaner creatures ; but whom all nobler spirits must regard with defiance. It is idle to say, by way of apology, that this attack upon the Divinity is broken up into paragraphs, with the names of *Cain* and *Lucifer* prefixed to them ; since what has been stated is the only sentiment of the work, unanswered and uncontradicted, to the impression of which everything is made to contribute. It accords but too well with earlier expressions of the feelings of the author. We might justify what has been said, by extracts from the poem ; but it would be necessary to quote passages, which no light occasion would excuse one for obtruding upon notice.

We read the first two cantos of *Don Juan* shortly after their appearance. The mass of buffoonery and profligacy which followed, we had not seen till about to prepare the present article. It was the last product of Byron's mind. The great merit aimed at in the work, is drollery. The

author drolls upon everything ; giving, for instance, in the first canto, a funny account of some shipwrecked sailors driven through hunger to devour one of their companions. It is rambling and incoherent, with frequent disregard of grammar and prosody. It furnishes, however, a sort of commentary upon the character and life of its author ; for he could not write long without writing about himself ; and in this work, his disclosures seem to be more liberal, unguarded, and prosaic, than in any other. In reading it, we may be reminded of what Medwin reports him to have said ; ‘ Why don’t you drink, Medwin ? Gin and water is the source of all my inspiration.’ One might have conjectured, perhaps, that a considerable part of it was written under such inspiration.

This production, left unfinished, was the concluding labor of the literary life of a man, who might, in his old age, have been honored with passionate admiration, and have continued, after death, to pour forth a pure splendor amid the eternal lights of poetry ; who might have delighted and ennobled his fellowmen by glorious conceptions and beautiful imaginations ; and who might have given all that electric energy to the expression of high and generous sentiments, which was wasted, for the most part, in adding force to the language of selfish melancholy, of misanthropy, or of violent and wicked passions. As it is, we have now to estimate, not what good, but what evil, may be the general result of his writings. There is much of his poetry, it is true, which may be read without injury by a tolerably healthy mind ; and there are passages of great strength and great beauty, free from the expression of any wrong sentiment. Nor is there much, which can be seducing to any one in his exhibitions of vice and impiety. He uses no gay coloring. He delights in painting moral disease and insane passions, rather than the loose and voluptuous banquet, which may precede them. Even in the writings of his later days, there is a truth and coarseness in his immorality, which is anything but attractive. But when such a writer as Byron expresses strongly, what he represents as his own emotions and sentiments, there are many who will adopt them, and apply his language to themselves. He has had followers, without doubt, who have affected depravity of which they were not guilty, and have bewailed their sufferings and deso-

lation, with a resolute determination to be miserable. His verses have done something to give a poetic interest to a selfish abandonment of duty ; to encourage the indulgence of passions, which, in the real intercourse of life, are merely offensive ; and to throw a charm over that sickly melancholy, to which the young are exposed, from too sensitive feelings, from indolence and timidity, and from desires at once too earthly and too romantic. But this is not an evil lasting in its nature. A writer like Byron becomes the founder of a new school of artificial sentiment, which has its day ; but which, in time, grows as obsolete as the Euphuism of Lilly, or the gallantry of Mademoiselle de Scuderi, or the affected sensibility of Sterne. Nothing is permanent but nature and truth. The fashions of one age are the ridicule of the next.

Still there is a pestilential atmosphere about the ruins of such a mind. The great injury likely to result from his writings, consists in the circumstance, that a man of powers so extraordinary, should have enlisted himself without shame in the cause of evil ; that he should have presented himself before the world to avow his contempt of decency, his depravity, and his impiety ; and that doing this, he should have received no harsher repulse from its favor. He has given to the bad the whole countenance of his name. Strongly interesting his fellowmen through the displays of his genius, and, at the same time, rendering himself justly exposed to reprobation by his vices, he has confused and weakened the moral sentiments of his admirers. The effect appears in some of the highly colored eulogies, which followed his death. They have served to mark and to aggravate the evil. But the stream of time is already washing away the foundations of that factitious admiration, of which he has been the object. In another age, with other fashions and prejudices, the character of Byron will be estimated as it ought to be. The men of another age, however, with different subjects of interest from what we have, can hardly be expected to sympathise strongly in the regret, which we may feel, while contemplating the abuse of such powers and such qualities, as he possessed.

SPECIMENS OF THE BRITISH POETS, &c.

Campbell, Thomas

The Atheneum; or, Spirit of the English Magazines (1817-1833); Aug 15, 1819; 5, 10;

American Periodicals

pg. 384

From the Literary Gazette.

SPECIMENS OF THE BRITISH POETS, &c.

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

OUR preceding remarks have brought us to the third and last part of Mr. Campbell's Introductory Essay on British Poetry, which part commences with the era of James I. The House of Stuart were, with all their failings, distinguished for a love of literature and the arts : and even the pedantic James (as he is represented, we think with much exaggeration) was friendly to the stage and its best writers. Shakspeare received special marks of his favour, and he was the patron of Ben Jonson. Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, and Shirley flourished under his reign; and, with the exception of honest Ben, the *romantic* school of the drama not only outstripped the *classical*, but reached its Augustan period. Of the Poets we have designated, Mr. Campbell gives brief and accurate descriptions. The civil wars, however, put an end to this dynasty of our dramatic bards.

" Their immediate successors or contemporaries belonging to the reign of Charles I. many of whom resumed their

lyres after the Interregnum, may, in a general view, be divided into the classical and metaphysical schools. The former class, containing Denham, Waller, and Carew, upon the whole, cultivated smooth and distinct melody of numbers, correctness of imagery, and polished elegance of expression. The latter, in which Herrick and Cowley stood at the head of Donne's metaphysical followers, were generally loose or rugged in their versification, and preposterous in their metaphors. But this distinction can only be drawn in general terms ; for Cowley, the prince of the metaphysicians, has bursts of natural feeling, and just thoughts in the midst of his absurdities. And Herrick, who is equally whimsical, has left some little gems of highly finished composition. On the other hand, the correct Waller is sometimes metaphysical ; and ridiculous hyperboles are to be found in the elegant style of Carew."

Of Herrick, Mr. C. truly and prettily observes, that he has " passages

where the thoughts seems to dance into numbers from his very heart," ex. gr.

Gather the rose-buds while you may,
Old Time is still a flying ;
And that same flower that blooms to day
To-morrow shall be dying.

But we now come to an epoch made memorable by the name of Milton; who stood alone and aloof above his times, the bard of immortal subjects and of immortal fame. There is an admirable critique on the *Paradise Lost*.

"In Milton," he says, "there may be traced obligations to several minor English poets; but his genius had too great a supremacy to belong to any school. Though he acknowledged a filial reverence for Spenser as a poet, he left no Gothic irregular tracery in the design of his own great work, but gave a classical harmony of parts to its stupendous pile. It thus resembles a dome, the vastness of which is at first sight concealed by its symmetry, but which expands more and more to the eye while it is contemplated. His early poetry seems to have neither disturbed nor corrected the bad taste of his age.—Comus came into the world unacknowledged by its author, and Lycidas appeared at first only with his initials. These, and other exquisite pieces, composed in the happiest years of his life, at his father's country-house at Horton, were collectively published, with his name affixed to them, in 1645; but that precious volume, which included *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, did not (I believe) come to a second edition, till it was republished by himself at the distance of eight-and-twenty years. Almost a century elapsed before his minor works obtained their proper fame.

"Even when *Paradise Lost* appeared, though it was not neglected, it attracted no crowd of imitators, and made no visible change in the poetical practice of the age. He stood alone, and aloof above his times, the bard of immortal subjects, and, as far as there is perpetuity in language, of immortal fame. The very choice of those subjects be-spoke a contempt for any species of ex-

cellence that was attainable by other men. There is something that overawes the mind in conceiving his long deliberated selection of that theme—his attempting it when his eyes were shut upon the face of nature—his dependence, we might almost say, on supernatural inspiration, and in the calm air of strength with which he opens *Paradise Lost*, beginning a mighty performance without the appearance of an effort."

"The warlike part of *Paradise Lost* was inseparable from its subject. Whether it could have been differently managed, is a problem which our reverence for Milton will scarcely permit us to state. I feel that reverence too strongly to suggest even the possibility that Milton could have improved his poem, by having thrown his angelic warfare into more remote perspective; but it seems to me to be most sublime when it is least distinctly brought home to the imagination. What an awful effect has the dim and undefined conception of the conflict, which we gather from the opening of the first book! There the veil of mystery is left undrawn between us and a subject, which the powers of description were inadequate to exhibit. The ministers of divine vengeance and pursuit had been recalled—the thunders had ceased

"To bellow through the vast and boundless deep," (in that line what an image of sound and space is conveyed!)—and our terrific conception of the past is deepened by its indistinctness. In optics there are some phenomena which are beautifully deceptive at a certain distance, but which lose their illusive charm on the slightest approach to them, that changes the light and position in which they are viewed. Something like this takes place in the phenomena of fancy. The array of the fallen angels in hell—the unfurling of the standard of Satan—and the march of his troops

"In perfect phalanx, to the Dorian mood
"Of flutes and soft recorders,"—

all this human pomp and circumstance of war—is magic and overwhelming illusion. The imagination is taken by

surprise. But the noblest efforts of language are tried with very unequal effect to interest us, in the immediate and close view of the battle itself in the sixth book; and the martial demons, who charmed us in the shades of hell, lose some portion of their sublimity, when their artillery is discharged in the daylight of heaven.

"If we call diction the garb of thought, Milton, in his style, may be said to wear the costume of sovereignty. The idioms even of foreign languages contributed to adorn it. He was the most learned of poets; yet his learning interferes not with his substantial English purity. His simplicity is unimpaired by glowing ornament,—like the bush in the sacred flame, which burnt but 'was not consumed.'

"In delineating the blessed spirits Milton has exhausted all the conceivable variety that could be given to pictures of unshaded sanctity; but it is chiefly in those of the fallen angels that

his excellence is conspicuous above every thing ancient or modern. Tasso had, indeed, portrayed an infernal council, and had given the hint to our poet of ascribing the origin of pagan worship to those reprobate spirits. But how poor and squalid in comparison of the Miltonic Pandæmonium are the Scyllas, the Cyclopes, and the Chimeras of the Infernal Council of the Jerusalem! Tasso's conclave of fiends is a den of ugly incongruous monsters. The powers of Milton's hell are godlike shapes and forms. Their appearance dwarfs every other poetical conception, when we turn our dilated eyes from contemplating them. It is not their external attributes alone which expand the imagination, but their souls, which are as colossal as their stature—their '*thoughts that wander through eternity*'—the pride that burns amidst the ruins of their divine natures, and their genius, that feels with the ardour, and debates with the eloquence of heaven."

Concluded in our next.

The Siege of Corinth, a Poem. Parisina, a Poem.

[From the Monthly Review.]

THOUGH lord Byron has not chosen to give his name to these poems, the public cannot entertain any doubt of their legitimacy; since, in addition to the voice of report and the testimony of the publisher in the advertisements of the work, sufficient internal evidence of the fact is furnished not only by the general style and character of the compositions, but by various particular expressions and references contained in them. Nor do we see any sufficient ground for supposing (and this is the most material point to the reader) that the circumstance, to which we have alluded, has arisen from any consciousness of inferiority in these compared with his lordship's former productions: because, even if they should be judged to contain nothing quite equal to the best parts which might be selected from their predecessors, they possess the same vigorous conception, and brilliant and successful elicitation, which have been by general consent ascribed to lord Byron's muse.

On the general merits and defects of this noble author's poetry, we have had so many opportunities of expressing our opinion, that we shall not on the present occasion detain our readers with any such discussion. It will only be necessary to repeat that the greatest merit of the writer consists in his skill in dissecting the human character, and in drawing and contrasting the effects of the more violent passions; while his most general faults are a want of variety, a perpetual gloominess, and an unpardonable license both of phraseology and of versification. His pictures exhibit the bold and decisive lines and striking contrasts which, in the sister art, are to be found in the works of Rembrandt, accompanied by the same depth of shadow, and the same brilliancy of the few bright tints which they contain: but they seldom display any of the breadth of light, and the gay variety of colouring, which characterize the Italian school. We cannot better express our general ideas than by the above illustration, since these poems are too original to be compared with any other productions in the same art.

Of the two tales which are at present before us, the first is, in our opinion, endued with the least interest and merit; and the story is extremely meagre. It is well known that, in the year 1715, the city of Corinth underwent a siege and storm by the Turkish army which was led by the famous vizier Ali Coumougi; and this is the action which the poem describes.

Alp, a Venetian renegade, has a high command in the vizier's army, and is incited to a vigorous prosecution of the siege not less by his thirst of revenge against his injured country than by the hope of possessing himself, in the assault, of the person of Francesca, the daughter of Minotti, the governor of the town; to whom, in earlier days, before his crime, he had been a favoured suitor. Having wandered, in the night before the storm, through the infidel camp to the very gates of the town, the renegade encounters the form of his mistress, who earnestly warns him of the danger in which he stands of immediate and everlasting perdition: but he refuses to listen, and returns to the camp to prepare for the assault. The town is carried; and in the conflict Alp encounters Minotti, against whom he hesitates to raise his hand, eagerly mentioning Francesca, but he receives for answer that she died 'yester-night.' Horror-struck with the recollection of the vision which at the same moment he had himself witnessed, the wretched warrior recoils, and immediately receives his death by a shot through his head. Such of our readers, as are acquainted with this portion of history, will recollect that a dreadful explosion of gun-powder took place at this storm, which lord Byron has worked up into a fine incident for the conclusion of his poem.

We shall now quote a part of the description of the repose of the night-scene, when Alp commences his solitary walk:

'The waves on either shore lay there
Calm, clear, and azure as the air;
And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,
But murmured meekly as the brook.
The winds were pillow'd on the waves;
The banners droop'd along their staves,
And, as they fell around them furling,
Above them shone the crescent curling;
And that deep silence was *unbroke*,
Save where the watch his signal spoke,
Save where the steed neigh'd oft and shrill,
And echo answered from the hill,
And the wide hum of that wild host
Rustled like leaves from coast to coast,
As rose the Muezzin's voice in air
In midnight call to wonted prayer;
It rose, that chaunted mournful strain,
Like some lone spirit's o'er the plain:
'Twas musical, but sadly sweet,
Such as when winds and harp-strings meet,
And take a long unmeasured tone,
To mortal minstrels' unknown.

It seemed to those within the wall
A cry prophetic of their fall:
It struck even the besieger's ear
With something ominous and drear,
An undefined and sudden thrill,
Which makes the heart a moment still,
Then beat with quicker pulse, ashamed
Of that strange sense its silence framed;
Such as a sudden passing-bell
Wakes, though but for a stranger's knell.'

The simile printed in italics is extremely beautiful, and indeed the whole is excellent. The contrast to this stillness in the agitation of the hero is equally well-drawn:

' His head grows fevered, and his pulse
The quick successive throbs convulse;
In vain from side to side he throws
His form, in courtship of repose;
Or if he dozed, a sound, a start
Awoke him with a sunken heart.
The turban on his hot brow pressed,
The mail weighed lead-like on his breast,
Though oft and long beneath its weight
Upon his eyes *had* slumber sate,
Without or couch or canopy,
Except a rougher field and sky
Than now might yield a warrior's bed,
Than now along the heaven was spread.
He could not rest, he could not stay
Within his tent to wait for day,
But walked him forth along the sand,
Where thousand sleepers strewed the strand.
What pillow'd them! and why should he
More wakeful than the humblest be?
Since more their peril, worse their toil,
And yet they fearless dream of spoil;
While he alone, where thousands passed
A night of sleep, perchance their last,
In sickly vigil wandered on,
And envied all he gazed upon.'

This is followed by another fine passage,* in which the author, describing the surrounding objects, ('Lepanto's gulf-----the brow of Delphi's hill,' &c.) is led to apostrophize their ancient glories: but we have not space to extract it.

* This was given in our last number, p. 455.

Hitherto, the metre has been regular: but the reader must prepare to find in the subsequent extracts a change in that particular, which not even their utmost beauties can withhold us from censuring. It seems a strange perversion of taste, that when the subject is rising in interest, and the incidents are becoming more powerful and affecting, the verse should on a sudden be changed to a style which is removed the farthest of all from dignity, and scarcely susceptible of it in any hands.

The faults of this poem are of the same character which we have described as belonging to lord Byron's writings in general; and it is perhaps the best praise that we can bestow on him to say that, in order to exhibit his beauties, we are led to extract whole passages, while to show his faults we are forced to pick out individual lines and expressions. On that ungrateful labour, we do not feel ourselves now obliged to spend many moments: but we cannot forbear to censure such expressions as that which occurs at line 910, which describes the Madonna 'and the *boy-god* on her knee;' and we hope that the author will, in the next edition, expunge or alter the four lines from line 957 to 960, the subject of which will scarcely be deemed proper for such a poem as the present.

Parisina, the second of the tales before us, is on the whole one of lord Byron's happiest efforts: but, from the nature of the story, we doubt whether it will, in general, meet with the admiration which it appears to us to deserve.

This tale is written throughout in the octosyllabic metre, to which lord Byron has in most of his works given a force and dignity that were before unknown to it. In phraseology, too, this poem is, with very few exceptions, not open to censure. It is in fact the most equable of all the writer's works. Though it is occupied with some of the most violent and fatal of the human passions, and describes some of the most distressing situations in which human beings can be placed, the noble author has dealt with them more calmly than his usual custom would have led us to expect. The picture is indeed all gloom, but the *keeping* is good, and the general effect is as pleasing as any display of such tragical circumstances can be made.

The Eclectic Review thus concludes its examen of these two poems:

"It is surely a singular circumstance, that lord Byron has hitherto confined himself to the narration of crime, and to the delineation of vicious character. His spirited sketches, for they are after all sketches, exquisitely spirited and powerful, but nothing more, are all devoted to the illustration of the

energies of evil. This certainly evinces either a great deficiency of taste, or very limited powers of conception. The gloomy phantasmagoria of his pencil, though differing in form and costume, are all of one character, or rather of one cast; for the sentiments and feelings which lord Byron attributes to the personages in his poems, do not constitute them *characters*. There is no individuality of feature in his portraits. He describes admirably a certain class of emotions; but these should have been embodied in character, rather than described; and his characters should have been developed by their actions. As there is no individuality in his conceptions, so there is little variety. It should seem that one strongly imagined personification had taken possession of the poet's mind, so that whatever be the scene or the story, this ideal actor is still the hero of the drama.

We are far from depreciating lord Byron's genius. In energy of expression, and in the power of giving to words the life and breath of poetry, we think he is almost unequalled by any contemporary. We conclude that his powers are circumscribed, from the way in which he has employed them, rather than from any other circumstance. To go down to posterity, however, as a great poet, something more than genius is requisite. There must be a high and holy ambition of legitimate fame; there must be a moral discipline of the intellect and feelings: the good, the true, and the beautiful, must, as ideal archetypes, occupy the visions of the poet; and he must be the partaker of an elevating and purifying faith, by which his mind may be brought into contact with "things unseen" and infinite. All these requisites must meet in a great poet; and there must be an appearance at least of approximation to them, in the character of any one that aspires to maintain, by means of his writings, a permanent influence over the minds and sympathies of his fellow men. There must be at least the semblance of virtue, or of the love of virtue."